

GLOBAL DIALOGUE

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Christine Schickert

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> Editorial

In many countries all over the world, democratic institutions and processes face increased challenges and pressure. Authoritarian tendencies can be observed in young and old democracies alike: a top-down leadership gains prominence again, nationalism soars, and civil society is weakened through the restriction of political rights. Women's and minorities' rights are particularly under attack. In the interview opening this issue of *Global Dialogue* Nancy Fraser, one of today's most renowned and thought-provoking feminist thinkers, takes up some of the aspects of this development when she debates the question of building a more inclusive feminist movement and discusses her idea of a feminism for the 99%.

The articles of our first symposium on "Challenged Democracy" examine how democracy is under pressure in specific parts of the world, from the situation in post-apartheid South Africa to the politics of austerity threatening it in a country like Greece and the erasure of women's contributions in accounts of the Egyptian Revolution. While the authors describe and analyze new developments such as the authoritarian turn in capitalism, they also evaluate concepts and ideas aimed at strengthening democratic processes.

In May 2018, Aníbal Quijano, one of Peru's and Latin America's most eminent sociologists, passed away at the age of 87. His work on imperialism, colonialism, and his concept of the "coloniality of power" influenced generations

of sociologists everywhere. Two of his close colleagues and friends look back at his life and celebrate his legacy.

For our second symposium entitled "Facing Poverty," we gathered papers analyzing a variety of manifestations of poverty, ranging from the impact of austerity politics in Greece to the increasing number of poor women in Latin America despite a friendly political economy. Six authors from around the globe were invited to shed light on the specific regional developments of poverty and obstacles the policies against it are faced with.

In her article on global modernities Sujata Patel, a prominent sociologist from India discusses the nature and content of this theory of the globalizing world. She gives a historical and theoretical insight into this concept of multiple modernities and the critiques it draws on.

From the beginning, Polish thinkers have played an important role in developing sociology as a discipline and therefore this issue offers insights into its history in Poland. But it is not only its history that stimulated us to focus on this country but also its vivid sociology engaged today in many issues of our time. The articles introduce the readers to current research, like studies on young precarious workers, on the recent voting behavior of the Poles as well as on the changes in the Polish public sphere and their implications for sociology today. ■

Brigitte Aulenbacher and **Klaus Dörre**,
editors of *Global Dialogue*

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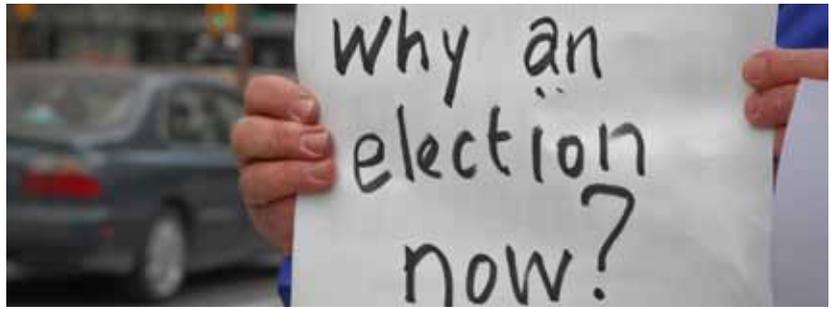
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Democracy is under pressure in many parts of the world today. In this symposium, eight sociologists highlight the challenges democracy faces in different countries, discuss how people struggle for more democratic rights, and critically analyze current political practices.



The topic of poverty and the reality of people **facing poverty** have always been a pressing issue for sociologists. In this symposium, five scholars from around the world discuss specific regional developments of poverty-reducing policies (or the lack thereof) and analyze different trajectories in particular spheres of basic human needs such as food security.



This section gives an introduction into the historical development of **Polish sociology** as well as insights into current sociological research in this country.



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“**In our current world, we cannot think of culturally, racially, or ethnically homogeneous nation-states anymore. Listening to the ones that have been silenced is a historical debt that must be paid in order to deepen democracy.**”

Andrea Silva-Tapia

> Feminism in Neoliberal Times

An Interview with Nancy Fraser



| Nancy Fraser.

Nancy Fraser is one of today's most eminent critical theorists and feminist thinkers. She is Professor of Philosophy and Politics at the New School for Social Research in New York. In a number of widely read publications, among them *Redistribution or recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (2003), a debate with Axel Honneth, she develops a theoretical concept of justice and injustice, arguing that justice can be conceptualized in two ways: as distributive justice and justice of recognition. She claims that both redistribution and recognition are central to fighting today's injustices. She has also published a large number of books and articles on feminism and feminist issues, both as a scholar and as an activist, among them *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (2013). Here she is interviewed by **Christine Schickert**, administrative director of the Research Group on Post-Growth Societies at the Department of Sociology of the University of Jena, Germany and assistant editor of *Global Dialogue*.

CS: *It has been almost ten years since your article "Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History" was published. In it you basically argue that mainstream or liberal feminism has been co-opted by capitalism for its own ends. Could you outline your argument here?*

NF: I was writing that paper in a very specific moment, which was just when the world financial crisis was unfolding and Barack Obama, talking all about hope and change, had been elected to the presidency. It was a period in

which everybody acknowledged that we were at a very decisive and scary moment, and there was a lot of hope that something different might happen. There was something about that moment that made me suddenly able to think about the history of these moments and the history of feminism as a whole. For a long time I had been unhappy with the direction that liberal or mainstream feminism had been taking, which I had tried to write about earlier by talking about the over-focus on recognition and under-attention to distribution, but this gave me an even clearer view of this crisis moment.

>>

My sense was that there had been a major shift in the nature of capitalist society that was running concurrently and parallel to the development of feminism. When the second wave of feminism erupted in the late 1960s and early 70s, we were really just on the cusp, and we thought that we were still operating in a secure, social democratic or state-managed capitalist regime. We thought that the gains which that regime had brought were more or less secure and that we could go from there to a more radical egalitarian and democratic world in which feminism would be a major player.

What happened instead, though, was the crisis of social democracy, which was just about to unfold, and the rise of neoliberalism. This was a totally new form of capitalism, and feminists – and not only feminists but many progressive, social movement actors – were very slow to realize this; to put it simply, we were still continuing this kind of recognition-focused agenda without understanding how the political economy had changed. It was no longer just that we forgot about redistribution, it was that without realizing it – or at least many people did not realize it – we had actually been contributing something positive and essential to neoliberalism. We had given it a kind of charisma and legitimacy, allowing it to use our emancipatory, liberatory charisma as a kind of legitimization tool or alibi for the regressive new regime of political economy that was being introduced.

That was the argument. Because we were in a crisis moment, apparently, in 2008-9, I thought that this was a time when it would be possible – as I said at the very end of the essay – to think big, to think outside the box, and to introduce a new kind of feminism through a shift or a course correction, in which we could be a part of a real anti-neoliberal project.

CS: I can imagine that many women who identified as feminist activists or scholars saw their work for feminist causes questioned and responded defensively to your analysis.

NF: I was expecting when I published the essay that I would get a lot of pushback. The reality is that I actually got much less than I expected, at least from the sort of academic feminist circles that I travel in. Even if people did not completely agree with me, they thought that I was on to something and that something had gone wrong with feminism. There was a wide sense that the world we thought we were going to make is not the world we actually are living in. There were many more people than I expected who were willing to think about this thesis.

I feel that it is neither an accusation nor a question of blame, rather a pressing need to understand how a certain form of progressive, neoliberal hegemony was able to

construct itself and win the battle for the common sense of the time. I think we need to understand what role we might have played unwittingly, so that we can do better and make a course correction. No white feminist liked hearing from black women that we had, without intending to, replicated a lot of assumptions that were either tied to white supremacy or were not at all sensitive to the different situation of women of color. But we had to listen to it and we had to absorb it, and I think the same is true about this. The first reaction is often defensive, but you cannot just remain in that state.

CS: But I assume liberal feminists don't see themselves as furthering a neoliberal agenda but fighting for greater gender equality...

NF: The question here is: what do we mean by equality? Equality is another one of those essentially contested concepts with competing interpretations of it. The liberal interpretation is what I would call a meritocratic interpretation. It is the idea that in the end women are individuals and they should, just like men, have the opportunity and the chance to go as far as their talents will take them as individuals. Equality here means trying to dismantle the barriers that cause discrimination; the problem of inequality is one of discrimination, and by removing discriminatory barriers, these talented, individual women can go as high as men.

The first thing I want to say is that this is a class-specific ideal. What it really means is that they want to be equal to the straight, white men of their own class. What feminism means to me is a more robust and radical idea of equality which is really about not diversifying sexual hierarchy but abolishing it – or greatly lessening it in any case. So this idea of meritocratic equality I would not even really call equality. Liberal meritocracy as an interpretation of equality has brought some real gains but only for a very thin stratum of women. The overwhelming majority of women do not crack any glass ceiling; they are stuck in the basement, they are cleaning up and sweeping up the broken pieces of glass. I am part of trying to develop an alternative kind of feminism to this liberal, meritocratic feminism.

CS: Since the election of a number of right-wing leaders in the United States and Europe, there has been a debate around the question of whether a supposedly one-sided focus on "identity" in social movements at the expense of addressing economic inequalities lies at the root of right-wing successes. What does this debate mean for a feminist movement that on the surface has as one mobilizing factor our shared identity as women?

NF: I think we could address it at different levels. At the conceptual level, I have always argued that the idea that

there are some movements which are identity movements and some movements which are class movements is a misunderstanding. Class-based movements have two aspects. They have a structural aspect, which I tried to theorize in terms of distribution, but there are other ways to explain it, and they always have an identity aspect in the sense that all class struggles, even when they are not explicitly focused on this, convey an image of whose struggle it is – of gain or of loss, etc. I do not think feminism is any different; women’s subordination in capitalist societies is every bit as structurally grounded as class exploitation is. So I get annoyed when people say that feminism is an identity movement and this other thing is a class movement. I think our claims are as deeply structural and as rooted, as they used to say, in primary contradictions. At the same time, all movements have an identity basis.

The identity basis can lead you astray, though. There is now a buzzword, intersectionality. I have some criticisms of that language, but the main point is right. The main point is that not all women are in the same boat, not all working-class people are in the same boat, and not all people of color are in the same boat. There are these cross-cutting structural asymmetries; asymmetries of power, of advantage and disadvantage, etc. A feminism that says “we are not going to look at those issues, we are just going to talk about women” is going to end up speaking only for a privileged stratum of women. That is what I think the liberal, meritocratic feminism has done. Feminism has to be every bit as much about and sensitive to class, race, and all the other major axes of oppression in capitalist societies.

CS: You have yourself, along with a number of other prominent feminist thinkers, recently addressed this question of creating a more inclusive feminist movement and developed the idea for a “feminism for the 99 percent.” Could you tell us more about this initiative?

NF: It is a kind of populist language which we borrowed from Occupy. You may say that from a strictly sociological point of view it is not fully rigorous, but it has tremendous mobilizing power and conveys instantly that this is not the feminism of Christine Lagarde and of Hillary Rodham Clinton. It is almost a “fighting words” way of describing yourself as being against the crack-the-glass-ceiling, lean-in feminism. It is precisely an attempt at a course correction. What happened in recent decades, as I diagnosed it in that essay, was that in a sense feminism – or important, dominant currents of feminism – had been somehow sucked into a kind of alliance or, as Hester Eisenstein called it, a “dangerous liaison” with these sorts of neoliberal forces and was serving as an alibi for them. Therefore, the antithesis of the neoliberal forces which represent the 1% is a feminism that represents the 99%. It was a very simple

rhetorical strategy. The interesting thing about it – and it was just a few of us who dreamed it up – was that it actually stuck and got some traction, which to me shows that there was something there waiting for something like this to come along. There was a real felt need for it.

This feminism for the 99% is really concerned with the situation of the overwhelming majority of women who do the lion’s share of social reproduction and waged work and whose conditions of life are deteriorating under this regime of neoliberal, financialized capitalism. This form of capitalism requires many more hours of paid work per household than the previous kind of capitalism, is assaulting social welfare and all kinds of social protection regimes at the national level, and wields debt as a weapon. Women are on the front lines of this assault on social reproduction, and the feminist 99% is centering these aspects and really tying them to the problem of this form of capitalism. We are trying to name the system, as we used to say in SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), and whereas liberal feminism is about getting access to the system, we are talking about ways in which the system is making our lives unlivable.

CS: But 53% of white women in the United States voted for Donald Trump in 2016, a candidate who is not only openly sexist but who doesn’t concern himself with any kind of gender equality. Can the idea of a feminism for the 99% reach these women?

NF: Not all of them, but I think a good part of them. Of course, some are just like men who voted for Trump; they are Republicans who hate Hillary Clinton and would just not vote for her, business people, those who want free markets, etc. A lot of them are the usual suspects who vote Republican, but not all. Some of them are working-class women from deindustrializing areas that have been absolutely devastated by the shift of manufacturing outside of the United States and some of them are Southern women. There was a new industrialization in the south, often un-unionized, which has been devastated in recent years as well. They have been clobbered as well. There are also rural women, small town women where the unemployment is horrible, opioid addiction is rampant, and so on and so forth. The point is that these are not the people who are going to benefit from lean-in feminism or from any version of progressive neoliberalism.

There have not yet been too many serious, rigorous, ethnographic studies of why they voted as they did, but there will be. In the few interviews that I have seen – and this is not systematic – you can get a sense of what people were feeling. When they heard the Hollywood Access tapes (which was just before the election when Trump was bragging about grabbing women “by the pussy”), they said things like that it made them feel real bad, they did not like it, it was disrespectful, and they did not want him to talk

like that, but given everything else, he was still their best shot. In addition, I think there are also people who might not like the way he talked about Mexicans or Muslims, but even if it was terrible that he was disrespectful to those people to that extent, nevertheless he was talking about making things better for them.

Of course, I do not mean to say that all Trump supporters are racist. There are Trump voters who really are racist, but those we cannot reach and I am not concerned about them. I am concerned about the ones – and I think there is a substantial chunk of them – who could be reached by the left. We know that there were 8.5 million Americans who voted for Trump in 2016 who had voted for Obama in 2012.

The most important point is that by the time the November election came, the only other option was Hillary Clinton, and that meant progressive neoliberalism. Bernie Sanders had represented something else, but he was out of the game at that point.

CS: So how do you think these 8.5 million Americans can be reached by the left?

NF: The politics that I am supporting, of which feminism for the 99% is one part, is to try to revive something like

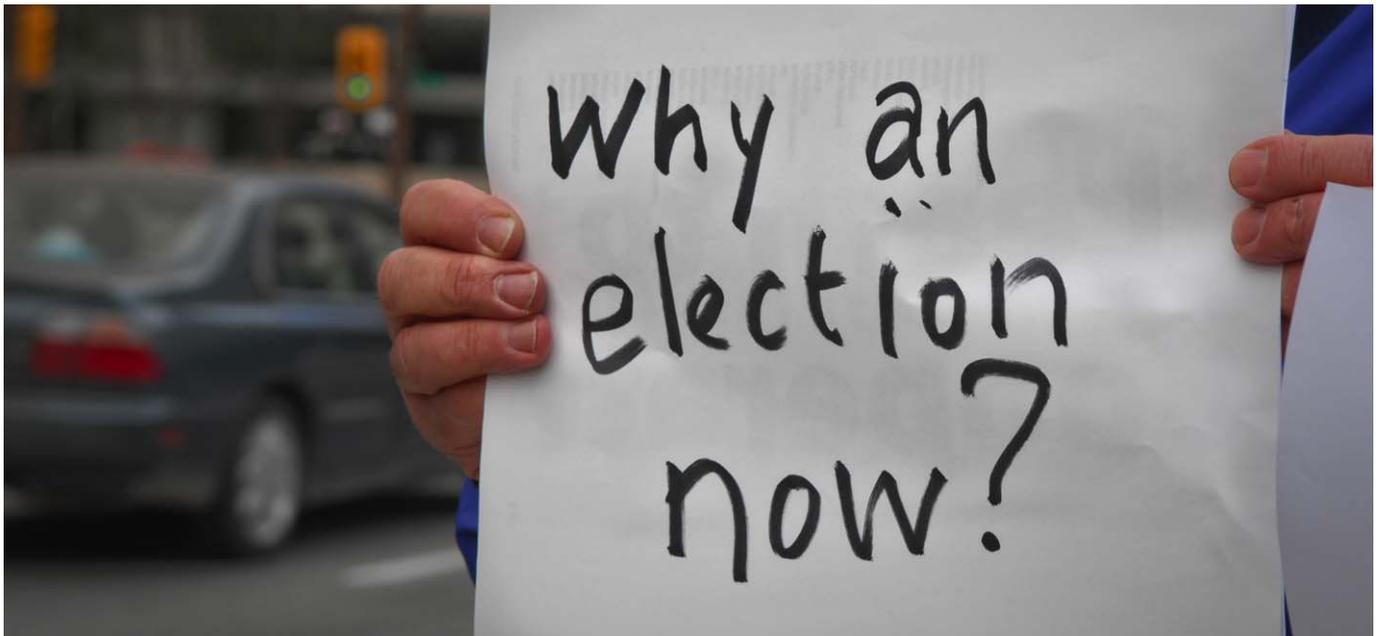
the Sanders' option (I am only using his name as a shorthand). This involves taking every progressive social movement, trying to split it between those who are for the 99% and those who are for the 1% – of course this is crude, but the idea should be clear – and putting them all together. What you had with Sanders was the idea that you could combine a lot of pro-working-class and pro-working-family, bread-and-butter issues: amongst others, Medicare for all, breaking up the banks, and free college tuition.

When I say working class, I do not just mean white people. In the United States, the working class has a lot of people of color and women in it, and they think of themselves increasingly as working class. So take these bread-and-butter issues that benefit the 99% and join them up with things like reforming the criminal justice system, which is a pressing issue for people of color, with reproductive freedom, which is a pressing issue for women, and with other issues equally structural and material which are – though they should not be – thought of as identity issues. So I think feminism for the 99% is an example for other social movements to follow. So let us have, for example, environmentalism for the 99%. We have these currents, but let us really call them that and put them together in an obvious way. ■

Direct all correspondence to Nancy Fraser <frasem@earthlink.net>

> The Crisis of Democracy

by **Hauke Brunkhorst**, University of Flensburg, Germany



That democracy is in crisis is a widespread analysis today in the social sciences. Flickr/ItzaFineDay. Some rights reserved.

After a century of fierce, bloody, and brutal class struggles, global civil wars, and world revolutions, the capitalist state became the *cosmopolitan-constituted* (e.g. Articles 23 to 26, German Basic Law), *democratic* and *social* state (Articles 20 and 28, German Basic Law). In the Global North, justice became an “existing concept” (Hegel).

Relations of production were partially socialized, with property split up into countless distinct forms spanning private and public. The capitalist and the worker spent their vacation at the same seaside resort, the former with a sea view, the latter with a street view. But they had to swim in the same water, play on the same beaches, and send their kids – and this is the crux of the matter – to the same public school. The worker drove a small car, the boss a large one, but each of them ended up in the same traffic jam, as there were no skyscrapers with helipads for the rich yet – nor high-rises without adequate fire protection for the poor.

Yet the Global North’s prosperity came at the high cost of the South’s devastation. The nationally confined welfare state was *white*, *male*, and *heterosexual*. No existing justice without an “existing contradiction” (Hegel). Democracy ended – and it did so everywhere – at the *color line* and the *gender line*. Since the 1960s, new social movements have protested against this time and again, becoming increasingly successful in gaining human rights, civil rights for people of color, women’s emancipation, disabled rights, sexual self-determination, environmental protection, and a cosmopolitan culture. When students and workers joined forces in Paris in May 1968, the dream of a unification of the *artistic critique* and *social critique* of modern capitalism (Boltanski) seemed to come true at last. It became realistic to demand the impossible. What followed, however, was economic recession – which brought the political right into office.

> From state-embedded markets to market-embedded states

The bloody military coups in Chile (1973) and Argentina (1976), generously supported by the West, were the *experimentum crucis*, while the neoconservative electoral victories in Great Britain (1979) and the United States (1981) paved the way, and the self-destruction of bureaucratic socialism (1989) finally removed the last obstacle to neoliberal globalization. Over the course of just a few years, state-embedded markets became market-embedded states. The primacy of public law was substituted by a vast (and growing) number of transnational regimes subject to private law which, as was the case with the erstwhile Roman Civil Law, exclusively serves the purpose of coordinating the interests of the ruling classes across the empire. Legal formalism, which emancipates us all from informal rule, was complemented by a highly dynamic informal law, revealing the contours of a new “Dual State” (Fraenkel) of formal statutory law and informal dispositive law.

One paradigmatic example of this was the Eurogroup. Following his exclusion from this body at the height of the crisis in 2015, the Greek finance minister inquired as to the legal justification for this decision. The chairman of the Eurogroup called on his lawyers to explain that the group had no procedural norms, as it was essentially non-existent in legal terms, and that its members could do almost whatever they wanted other than commit murder.

The state’s economic power to intervene is impeded by enforced market conformity, while its organizational power and police force remain intact so as to effectively fulfill their role as a “maintenance squad in a factory,” ensuring the continuation of the “overall market order” and yet firmly “embedded” in its power (Hayek). Being embedded in the world market ensures that investors can freely select their country of choice, while states in turn cannot choose their investors and are thus forced into a merciless race to the bottom for attractive production conditions. As a result, the social differences between classes, nations, nationalities, and generations are propelled to dizzying heights.

Football is in many ways a reflection of global society. If professional players in the English Premier League earned just about twice as much as the ordinary fan in 1985, they now make 200 times as much. Along with the rise of players’ incomes came an increase in ticket prices. Long-standing football fans, unable to follow suit, resigned, and stayed away, and the stands were filled by those who made more money. The same picture is found outside the stadiums: the run-down neighborhood, no longer able to afford admission to the new society, drowning in political apathy, alcohol, and drug-related prostitution. Election turnout is under 30%, while rising to over 90% in the wealthy parts of town, feeding the latter’s illusion of marching at the

forefront of progress. And even if progress again turns out to be a lot smaller than it initially appeared, one is at least still left with a voluminous wallet. Naturally, the parties on the left, who continuously lose voters, move further to the right at each election – as one would expect in a market economy grounded in the infinite rivalry of evolution.

> Social inequality creates political inequality

The major feminist and multicultural achievements, which destroyed decades-old relations of domination, are losing their “fair value” (Rawls). The unemployed, Jewish, lesbian, and previously convicted black woman can no longer leave the “blood ties” (Marx) of her native ghetto behind – where she is vulnerable to all conceivable anti-Semitic, homophobic, and misogynist prejudices to the same extent as she is confronted with the sexism and violence of police and gangs of men.

If electoral campaigns offer only *technical* alternatives characterized by distinct micro-economic strategies of adjustment to the world market rather than *political* alternatives to neoliberal market economy, democracy ceases to exist.

The “glittering misery” (Kant) of the shopping malls reveals its horrific un-glittering face in the Libyan Desert, at sea, and in the camps along our southern borders. At the former Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, now converted into a deportation center, the European Union is sacrificing that which it once purported to stand for. The “area of freedom, security and justice” (Article 4, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, henceforth TFEU) “with respect for fundamental rights” (Article 67, TFEU), guaranteeing the international “right to asylum” (Article 18, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU) and “compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement*” (Article 78, TFEU), in which “racism and xenophobia” are prevented and combatted (Article 67, TFEU), is translated into concrete law through three different boundaries at the appallingly unsanitary, medically undersupplied, and utterly overcrowded Moria camp on Lesbos: The first, brick-wall boundary encompasses the detention camp, housing rejected asylum seekers and newly arrived people illegally approved for deportation. The second boundary, made of barbed wire, lookout towers, and armed guards, surrounds the refugee housing compound with the detention camp at its center. The third is the sea, and the island no one is allowed to leave. By virtue of the sea, which protects the very nature of our markets, the border becomes an element of natural law. Whoever arrives is detained, as if flight were a crime. As Carolin Wiedemann puts it: “Places like Moria are planned all over the EU. They are supposed to be called ‘Controlled Centers’ [in German: ‚Kontrollierte Zentren‘] One would prefer not to guess what the [German] abbreviation for this title could be.” ■

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> The Rise of Authoritarian Capitalism

by **Christian Fuchs**, University of Westminster, United Kingdom

Far-right politics has in recent years expanded and consolidated its power. We have Donald Trump (Republican Party) in the USA, Viktor Orbán (Fidesz) in Hungary, Heinz-Christian Strache (Freedom Party) in Austria, Geert Wilders (Party for Freedom) in the Netherlands, Narendra Modi (Bharatiya Janata Party) in India, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AKP) in Turkey, the Alternative for Germany, Jarosław Kaczyński (Law and Justice) in Poland, Marine Le Pen (former National Front) in France, the Lega Nord in Italy, Vladimir Putin (All-Russia People's Front) in Russia, etc. How can this development best be characterized? What sociological categories are best suited for this purpose?

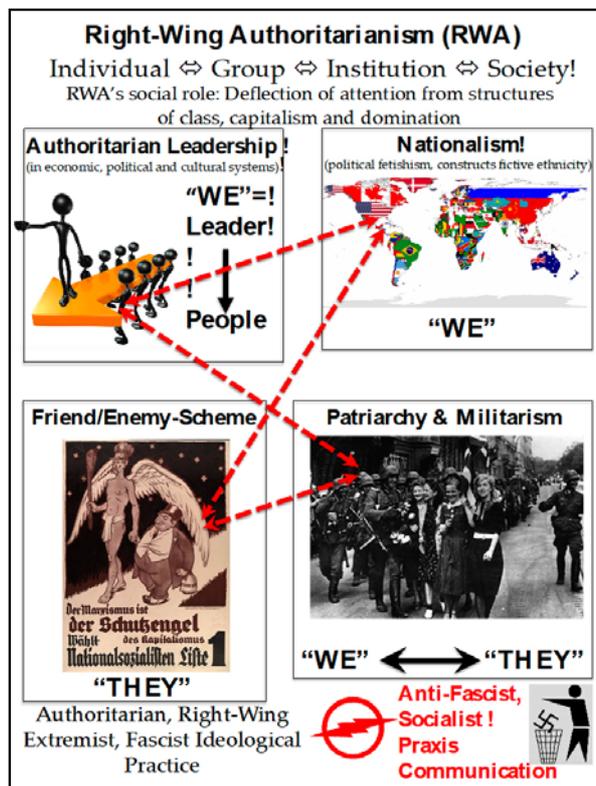
A prominent suggestion is that the notion of populism should be used. Jan-Werner Müller (2017) has recently renewed this proposal in his book *What Is Populism?* In the book, he defines populism as “a particular *moralistic imagination of politics*, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified [...] people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior. [...] Populists are always antipluralist: populists claim that they, *and only they*, represent the people.” He also notes that populism is “an exclusionary form of identity politics” that poses “a danger to democracy” and aims to “suppress civil society.”

Such approaches use one and the same category for Syriza, Evo Morales, Podemos, or Bernie Sanders on the left and Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, or Marine Le Pen on the right. The outcome is that, just like in the theory of totalitarianism, the radical right is compared to the left and thereby the dangers of the first are trivialized. For Müller, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders are both populists. Bernie Sanders certainly is an unconventional politician, but in contrast to Trump there are no doubts about his democratic orientation.

The approach taken in my 2018 book *Digital Demagogue: Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter* is different and combines critical political economy, ideology critique, and critical psychology. Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) articulates four elements (see Figure 1): the belief in the need for top-down leadership; nationalism; the friend/

enemy scheme; and militant patriarchy (law and order policies; idealization of warfare and soldiers; repression of constructed enemies; conservative gender relations). RWA serves the ideological purpose of distracting attention from the role of class structures and capitalism as foundations and causes of social problems. Refugees, immigrants, developing nations, Muslims, etc., are constructed as scapegoats who are blamed for problems such as unemployment, low wages, economic stagnation, the decline of public services, the housing crisis, and crime. Trump blames Mexico and China for deindustrialization and social decline without ever mentioning that US capital exploits workers both in the US and in destinations of outsourced capital, including in Chinese sweatshops and Mexican *maquiladoras*.

Figure 1: A Model of right-wing authoritarianism



Source: C. Fuchs, 2018.

RWA is neither a form of consciousness nor a structure nor a type of society. It is a process that can take place on different levels of society: the individual (authoritarian personality structure, consciousness, individual political behavior), political groups and movements, ideology, institutions, society as totality. Right-wing extremism and fascism are intensifications of RWA that tolerate or actively pursue physical violence and terror as political means.

Culturalist explanations of the rise of RWA claim that the rise of a “post-materialist” society has created a generation gap, in which the older generation holds conservative values and moans about the loss of the past. But for example, the post-materialism hypothesis cannot explain why in the Austrian federal elections of 2017, the far right was the strongest party in the age group 16-29 (30%), but only the third largest party among those aged 60+.

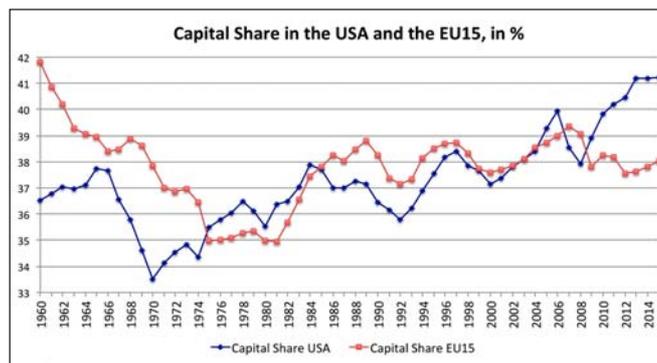
An alternative explanation takes political economy seriously. For this purpose, the approach of critical political theorist Franz L. Neumann in his 1957 essay [Anxiety and Politics](#) is helpful. The rise of right-wing authoritarianism according to this explanation has to do with the alienation of labor (see Figures 2 and 3); destructive competition; social alienation that creates fear of social decline; political alienation from the political system, politicians, and political parties; and the institutionalization of anxiety by far-right groups that stoke fears and advance the politics of scapegoating.

Figure 2: The share of wages in the GDP in the USA and the EU over time



Data source: AMECO.

Figure 3: The share of capital in the GDP in the USA and the EU over time



Data source: AMECO.

Authoritarian capitalism is the result of neoliberal capitalism’s negative dialectic. The contradiction between the freedom of the market and social freedom resulted in rising inequalities and crises that after the 2008 crash turned into a new quality. The bourgeoisification and neoliberalization of social democracy, the weakness of the left, and postmodernist identity politics that underestimated the importance of class politics and class analysis exacerbated the rise of the far-right and authoritarian capitalism. Neoliberal capitalism resulted in the universalization of alienation. As Harvey, Hardt and Negri, as well as myself have argued [elsewhere](#), neoliberalism brought about the commodification of almost everything so that we have experienced ongoing primitive accumulation by dispossession and the real subsumption of society under capital. In David Harvey’s words: “Widespread alienation has resulted in Occupy movements as well as right-wing populism and bigoted nationalist and racist movements. Donald Trump is the President of alienation.” ■

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> Ethnicized Citizenship as Illegitimate Citizenship

by **Andrea Silva-Tapia**, Humboldt University of Berlin and Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany

> Citizenship and nation-state building in a still colonial world

Citizenship as a concept is ambiguous and the debate over its meaning is rather broad. While for some the term refers to a purely legal status given by nationality or country of belonging, for others it connotes a form of identity. Merging various definitions and following diverse authors like T.H. Marshall, Margaret Somers, T.K. Oommen, Engin F. Isin and Patricia K. Wood among others, citizenship can be described as a modern form of membership in a political and geographical space. Therefore, the concept of citizenship expresses *legal* and *symbolic* belonging to a nation-state. This seems a simple definition but it becomes more complex if we consider the historical context in which the concept of citizenship emerges.

Citizenship in its modern form developed hand in hand with the genesis of the nation-state. Citizenship is a concept simultaneously related to modernity, nation-state building, and a sense of belonging. This can be traced back to the late eighteenth-century idea of a nation-state, expressed in the French and the US revolutions and the independence of colonial states, which followed the same nation-state building pattern. A modern nation-state was defined as an independent state, with a written constitution, and ruled in the name of equal citizens. The principles of legitimacy, thus, changed from monarchy (or Divine Right) to the representation of a nation of equal citizens. However, these concepts of citizenship and nation-state are based in a singular (Eurocentric) way of building a nation-state, where coloniality strongly operated and still operates.

Illegitimate citizenship is another way of naming a colonial citizenship inserted in our current patriarchal, Eurocentric, and Christian-centered world-system. This colonial

world-system operates through global racial/ethnic hierarchies, which determine which groups deserve prestige and which do not. Anja Weiss argues that we can talk about racism “when a long-term and stable marker pretends to make alleged otherness visible and is impacting on social classifications, practice and institutions in a manner that attributes lesser rights to collectives of that category, irrespective of whether this marker refers to biological or other kinds of stable difference.” This ethnicized or racialized citizenship is experienced not only by indigenous and minority ethnic groups around the world, but also by migrants who suffer an ethnicization/racialization process, as happens with Turks in Germany or Latin Americans in the US. This ethnicization process means that a group is devalued and constituted as a homogeneous group due to its racial or cultural characteristics.

In this idea of the nation-state in a Eurocentric world-system, the nation is the essence on which modern states are built and the basis of their legitimacy. The relationship between nation and modern states seems evident and is usually not questioned in our daily lives. We often use the terms “nation,” “state,” and “country” interchangeably. And sometimes we even consider citizenship as a synonym for all of them.

> Legitimate and illegitimate citizens

People integrating the nation as a homogenous cultural group are considered legitimate citizens, while ethnicized citizens are considered illegitimate ones. The latter are considered as citizens of the country but not the legitimate or “real” ones. This illegitimacy related to ethnicization and race devaluation is a specific type of inequality that affects people’s dignity and the opportunities available to them and leads to discrimination and humiliation. This unequal-

“The racialized citizen, the illegitimate citizen, is always described as a part of a group, and never as an autonomous individual subject”

ity started as a citizenship inequality with the birth of the nation-state, but it follows classifications and structures that come from before (pre nation-state or colonial times). The leaders of the nation-state building or independence movement promoted a homogenous national identity that left many particularities aside, as happened with the case of Mapuches (an indigenous people in Chile), or Northeasterners in India (who represent several different ethnic groups in India, but are stereotyped and excluded in much the same way) and as happens today with ethnicized migrants (such as Turkish migrants in Germany). Mapuches in Chile and Northeasterners in India live in areas with less industrial development, where there are also fewer employment and educational opportunities. Both groups experience a series of conflicts with the state and police (in the case of Northeasterners even with the army) and their identity is confronted by the hegemonic national identity. In the case of Northeasterners, they also face violence and harassment from the rest of the population, especially when they leave the Northeast and migrate to cities like Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore.

Legitimate and illegitimate citizens are two types of citizens, despite the legal recognition of both. However, the belonging dimension is only recognized for the former, relegating the latter as secondary. Illegitimate citizens “lack” something, their culture and behavior is seen as incomplete, and this provokes discrimination and humiliation that are invisible to the rest of society.

> Consequences for democracy

Citizenship is a concept referring to individuals but when it is racialized or ethnicized, the individuality of the subjects is taken away. The racialized citizen, the illegitimate citizen,

is always described as a part of a group: “immigrants,” “Arabs,” “Muslims,” “indigenous,” “Northeastern Indians,” and never as an autonomous individual subject. This individuality is reserved for white people. As a consequence, the failures of a white European or European descendant are attributed to individual errors; they possess the privilege of being individual citizens. This has been conceptualized as “white privilege.” On the other hand, the colonial subject’s failures, the illegitimate citizen’s errors, are attributed to their culture, nation, race, ethnicity, but never to the individual as an autonomous citizen. Illegitimate citizens are always prisoners of their ethnicity and race in a way that people who enjoy white privilege are not. White privilege operates as an invisible dispositive; the ethnicity and race of the privileged are never mentioned or acknowledged. It doesn’t exist and it is this fact that brings out the freedom of individuality. The achievements and failures of the privileged are seen as individual accomplishments and not as part of their ethnic or racial belonging.

Not recognizing the experience of certain groups can lead to conflicts and even violence if their demands are not taken seriously. In our current world, we cannot think of culturally, racially, or ethnically homogeneous nation-states anymore. Listening to the ones that have been silenced is a historical debt that must be paid in order to deepen democracy. ■

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> The Fallacy of Democracy in Post-1994 South Africa

by **Hlengiwe Ndlovu**, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa



The book Rioting and Writing emerged from the #FeesMustFall movement and collects articles by student activists. Copyright: SWOP.

Although the concept of democracy has diverse interpretations that include democratically elected governments, free and fair elections, and the exercise of diverse human and individual rights, to many South Africans the meanings of democracy are deeply rooted in historical exclusion of the majority population. In addition to centuries of slavery and colonialism, there were 46 years of fighting a racist apartheid system that deliberately segregated and excluded black people from sociocultural spaces and economic opportunities. Black South Africans were looking forward to concrete meanings of democracy. Most importantly, the idea of a “rainbow nation” as coined by one of the struggle’s icons, Bishop Desmond Tutu, suggested that with apartheid gone, racially divided South Africans would become one nation with equal opportunities to sociocultural and economic resources.

The #FeesMustFall movement was/is a struggle built around the realization that democracy was a farce and the rainbow nation a myth. Although most historically white institutions like the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Cape Town (UCT), among others, pride themselves on having transformed the student population by increasing the number of black students, this is far from reality. These two universities still fall amongst the most expensive universities in the country with deep-rooted cultural and epistemic violence. Moreover, while the number of black students have increased, institutions of higher learning continue to systematically exclude students from poor backgrounds socially, geographically, culturally, and economically.

In South Africa, it was expected that, after 1994, previously excluded groups would benefit from the democratic dispensation; the main liberation party, the African National Congress (ANC), had in their slogan “a better life for

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In recent years, South Africa has been gripped by a student movement unprecedented in its militancy, arguably, since the 1976 Soweto students uprising. The #FeesMustFall movement emerged in 2015 and continued into 2016. The demands were forged around access to free quality education, and the transformation and decolonization of institutions of higher learning. This movement spanned all public universities and was characterized by a unique alliance between students and outsourced university workers. At the center of these struggles was a direct confrontation with the failures of democracy and the fallacy of the idea of a “rainbow nation” sold to South Africans after 1994.

all.” People expected their lives to improve in all spheres – including access to free quality education as proposed by the Freedom Charter, access to decent housing, water, electricity, employment opportunities, and sanitation – as outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) policy document. The waves of service delivery-related protests that wrecked black townships after 1994, violence within the labor sector such as the Marikana massacre of 2012, and the #FeesMustFall protests, among other cases, demonstrate the South African state’s failure to provide the expected outcomes of democracy.

South African universities cannot be separated from the broader social order. To unpack the post-1994 democratic crisis, it is important to revisit the negotiated transition of South African democracy, like other negotiated independences across Africa. Negotiation simply meant the strategic repositioning of negotiating parties disguised as a desperate effort to achieve a “peaceful transition.” This resulted in black South Africans attaining only political power to exercise their right to vote and to organize – a right that continues to be threatened by the post-1994 state violence. On the other hand, economic power and strategic resources such as land, banks, and mines continued in the hands of the previous owners – perpetuating the domination of a white supremacist system. This continues to exclude almost 80% of the black population from the economy. Speaking about democracy in post-1994 South Africa therefore becomes impossible without confronting the structural economic inequalities.

The #FeesMustFall movement emerged to confront questions of exclusion and to demand equal access to free quality education, transformation, and decolonization of the academic project and university culture. Interestingly, historically black universities like Fort Hare University (where many of the African struggle icons were educated), among others, have been in this struggle since history can remember. However, it took another problematic phenomenon – the romanticization of historically white universities by the South African white supremacist media – to have the struggle elevated to the international spotlight, where it was portrayed as having started at Wits University. Most importantly, #FeesMustFall came a few months after the #RhodesMustFall movement at UCT was already raising issues of transformation and decolonization of the curriculum and broader higher education system. Inextricably linked to the project of decolonization, these struggles became part of the critique of a global project of commercialization and marketization of universities at the expense of ontological and epistemological advancement.

Although historically white institutions claim to have transformed in terms of student population, structural

systematic exclusion continues to distribute inequalities along racial lines. Exorbitant fees mean that those who can afford to pay – predominantly white advantaged students and a few middle-class blacks – will have access while most black students are systematically excluded – defeating the notion of a rainbow nation. Furthermore, the academic staff – both international and South African – remains white, while the academic curriculum remains predominantly Eurocentric. This creates a mismatch and cultural clashes. The failure by most academic staff to adopt Afrocentric methods of ontological and epistemological knowledge production continues to pose a challenge for majority black students from poor townships.

The #FeesMustFall movement emerged to confront the failures of the democratic dispensation to achieve concrete democracy and to realize the dream of a rainbow nation. Although the movement posed a mega challenge to universities and the state, it also had its own challenges. In its earliest stages the movement was characterized by unity across political affiliations, race, and class divides. However, from the onset, it suffered from lack of internal democracy around ideological issues and questions of gender. Although the movement was started by womxn, there was a deliberate takeover by male comrades dominating the struggle and undermining womxn and gender non-conforming folks. However, womxn in #FeesMustFall were determined not to reproduce the same patriarchal system they were fighting. This divided the movement, as many accused the dissenting voices of being divisive. Furthermore, the state and universities became very repressive and violent. Riot police were deployed across campuses and given authority to exercise excessive force. Student activists were targeted, arrested, and some excluded from the university. Given the repressive nature of the undemocratic state, the movement had to retreat and explore alternative means of advancing the struggle.

The #FeesMustFall movement is currently in limbo. Some student activists are still languishing in prisons and some attending court cases. Although the South African state is progressing towards rolling out free education for the poor, the struggle for free quality and decolonized education continues. Democracy remains an event that took place on South African streets in the 1990s. It ended with the release of the late struggle icon Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners from Robben Island. For the majority of South Africans, democracy remains a fallacy and the rainbow nation a myth. For #FeesMustFall activists, the struggle continues, and for womxn and other marginalized bodies, democracy remains a struggle for centuries to come. ■

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> Democracy in Athens

by **Gerassimos Kouzelis**, University of Athens, Greece



Protests against austerity measures in front of the Greek Parliament. Flickr/konterz. Some rights reserved.

Talking about direct democracy nowadays can sound idyllic as its potential to actually be applied is extremely limited. The idea of substantial democratic control beyond parliament, as found in recent literature, sounds like a radical claim with utopian elements. How can the “demos,” the people, exercise even mediated power and control in a regime where terms are dictated by external actors – international organizations that are not democratically structured? Conditions in Greece, based on “memoranda of understanding,” are not conditions that allow democracy to function. The parliament – the people’s representatives – cannot act autonomously; their decisions are largely predetermined.

The fact that national sovereignty is partially compromised, as is the right of the parliament to make autonomous decisions, is a product (justifiable for many) of a crisis that was considered fiscal in nature and that had financial implications: the Greek debt. The crisis that has forced austerity and compromised national sovereignty *is* fiscal *indeed* – the prevalent economism is right in that aspect – but it is fiscal due to sociopolitical as well as

ideological reasons. Its potential as well as its necessity are due to the disarming of a regulating social state; the prevalence of a devastating liberal ideology in the absence of an opponent; the politically and socially uncontrolled restructuring of relations among several sectors of economy; and especially, capital consolidation and the organization of the economic power block. Thus a specific correlation of forces allowed for, nurtured, and exploited the crisis.

Although the term “neoliberal domination” is a rather simplistic one, it is useful to show how the decline of democracy was accompanied, from the outset, by the prevalence of a discourse (“neoliberalism”) that captures, legitimizes, and broadens this kind of domination. From the perspective of the Greek crisis especially, the in-depth deconstruction of democracy clearly appears as the cold hard *truth* of neoliberalism. The set of developments associated with the prevalence of this discourse, the conditions of its articulation as well as its consequences, the dynamics of capitalist reproduction as well as the imposed short-term trends, all intersect in strengthening *social authoritarianism*.

I list below several widely talked-about axes that characterized the 2010-2015 period, before political changes:

- Radically enhanced economic power and its interventions in the sphere of social organization beyond production, characteristic of which is the sort and extent of scandals that permeate the “elite” and intertwine economic interests with political ones.
- The full commercialization of media and cultural practices (especially monopolistic mass media and press complexes organized on party grounds).
- The decline, and business-marketing-like reconstruction, of political representation processes (the parties “transcending” politics, presented as commercial products and represented by television “stars”).
- The prevalence of a rationale which imposed a blind course of circulation of goods (“the market shows the way”) as its main principle.
- The process which was imposed as “democracy management” and was implemented during a course of constant expansion of the executive and partly the judiciary, at the expense of the legislature (through ministerial decisions without parliament’s approval and judicial interventions which were political in nature and verged on the arbitrary).
- The destabilization of state sovereignty both within the national social formation and in its international attachments (through the daily justification of the “Troika requirements”).
- The creation of islets inaccessible to democratic control, remote from publicity, and invisible to parliament itself, such as the field of fiscal and monetary policy, but also a large part of what was decided in Brussels (making indeed for a “state of exception”).

When the political change in 2015 occurred, aspects of these axes changed as well. Thus, the strong and explicit objective of strengthening democratic processes – a central policy option for Syriza – managed to reverse the trend of the latest axis, largely but not fully restoring parliamentary control, in that most decisions are still dictated by external centers or connected to commitments to the (now so-called) “institutions.”

Mainly, this new political condition restricted the hitherto rampant dynamics of dangerously reinforced security measures, surveillance, and authoritarian repression by security forces that openly cooperated with Nazi groups, and allowed society to develop democratic reflexes. Democracy in everyday social and political life became “normal” again.

Yet there remain two areas where neoliberal discourse continues to determine conditions, thereby making it more difficult for the recovery policy to be effective. The first is the cynical definition of reality as a set of fiscal data, as a complex set of items that “the people” can neither capture nor judge and, as such, as basically uncontrollable, and beyond the responsibility of any democratic planning or

collective decisions. The second area is the deconstruction of the public sphere and, hence, the impossibility of forming a public opinion based on sound judgement. The overbearing discourse of the media controlled by the few continues to be the primary system that monopolizes the “construction of reality,” despite the change in the political scene, while consultation and the exchange of arguments have become uncommon.

The inability to reverse momentum in these two areas reminds us that the deconstruction of democratic processes is not as connected to the neoliberal management of crisis as it is to aspects of social organization that have to be recognized as “systemic” and that have been recorded as elements of the crisis of democracy in the present era.

On the other hand, the picture has changed as far as the most infamous discourse that justifies the shrinking of democracy on the basis of economic crisis is concerned, i.e., the rhetoric of a “necessary” limitation of rights. This referred not just to social rights, but, as both the refugee crisis and the terroristic manipulation of the demands for public expression (elections and referendums) showed, to political rights as well. During the first five years of the crisis, governments proceeded to radically curb social rights (work, social welfare, health) and also denied political requests (control and public opinion), cultivating the idea that all these were “luxuries” amidst the lack of economic resources. The new government, by giving priority to the hitherto forgotten democratic principle of solidarity, has demonstrated that the crisis was just a pretext.

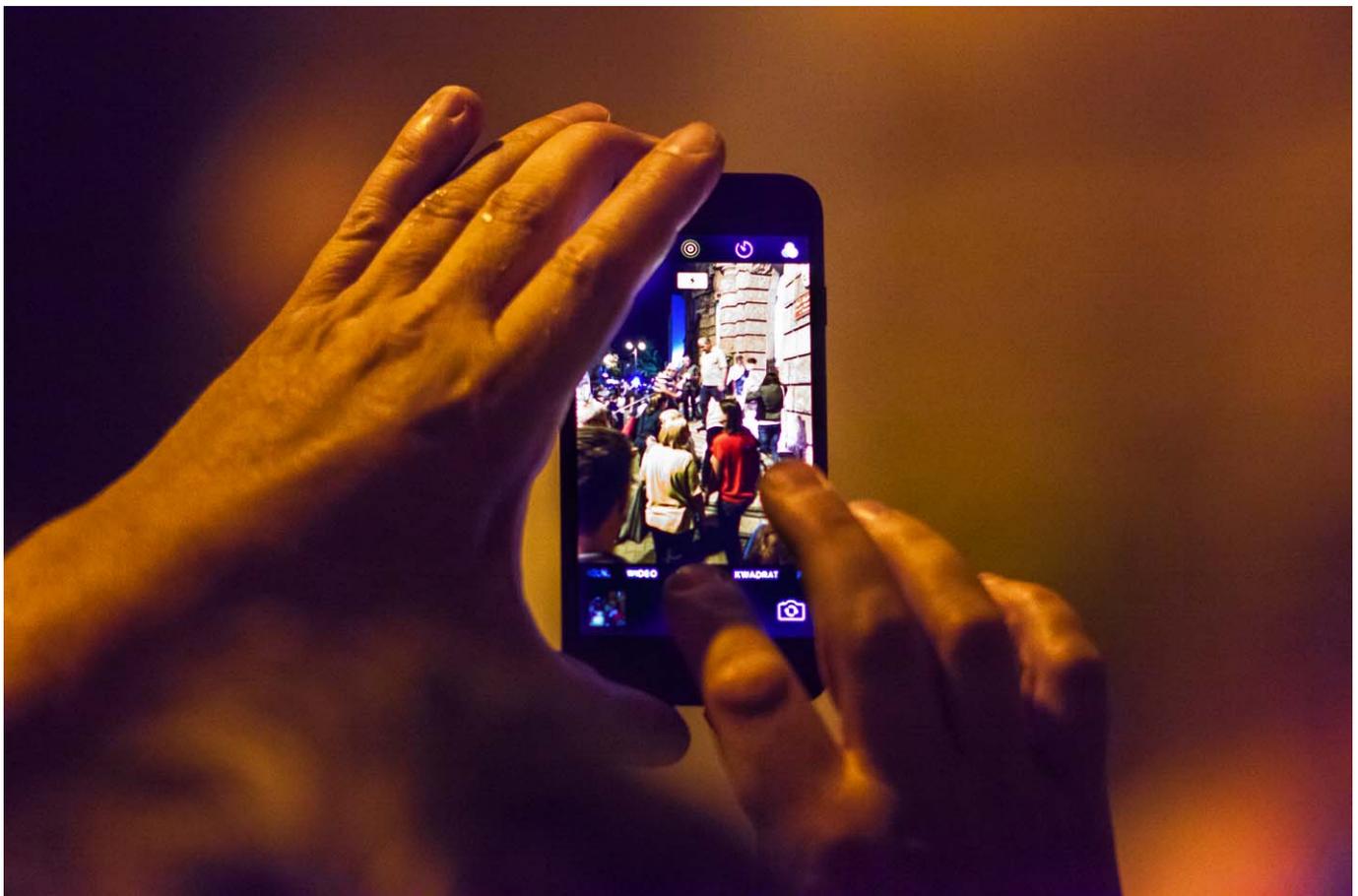
Where the landscape has not sufficiently changed and crisis continues to play, both ideologically and substantially, is in everything that has to do with the organization of life of all citizens as far as it concerns their outlooks, perspectives, mindsets, and their hopes for their family and community future as well as their own. This is critical because lack of perspective is grist of the mill of totalitarian and antidemocratic attitudes.

The power of neo-Nazi forces presents a threat. It is indeed growing dangerously and is engaged with manifestations of political organization that represent a novel phenomenon for Greece, in the form of the “racketeering” typical of a para-economy, and day-to-day delinquency. The discourse of specific political forces nourishing nationalism and populism, and even aspects of the prevailing neoliberal discourse concerning profits and power (“strong personalities” as well as “effective decision-making,” disregarding institutional rules and “bureaucratic” constraints) have played a very negative part, drifting too often not only into an empty rhetoric, but even to one of tolerating gang “politics.” Democracy, weakened under present conditions, thus requires alertness. ■

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> Social Media and Democracy A Double-Edged Sword?

by **Haryati Abdul Karim**, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Malaysia



Cell phones and social media have become an integral part of political activism. Flickr/Sakuto. Some rights reserved.

One of the most profound effects of social media on society is undoubtedly the extent to which it has become a tool of empowerment for ordinary citizens to determine their future lives. Social life today is characterized by Internet activism, in which people from all walks of life can easily be involved via the smartphones in the palms of their hands. It certainly paves the way for citizens to participate and engage more freely in public discussions about their country and the world outside while remaining relatively anonymous.

This is especially valuable in countries where freedom of expression is not a culture or norm.

Malaysia is no exception to this new development. Today, Malaysians use social media religiously to express themselves on all kinds of issues, as never before. It has become habitual for them to post comments, share or upload on their social media accounts videos and websites on issues that they feel strongly about, and start an online discussion among friends. Social media such as Face-

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book, Instagram, and YouTube are all very popular among Malaysians. But Facebook tops it all, with about 81% of Malaysians using Facebook, of which almost 90% access it via smartphone.

The extent to which the social media have actually “liberated” Malaysians can simply be seen by how vocal they are in openly expressing their views about the government and issues that are deemed sensitive, such as religion and ethnicity, despite the existence of laws restricting such discussions. This forms a healthy and vibrant atmosphere for people to get involved in national issues that affect them. Apart from politics, social media also enable Malaysians to express and carve out a hybrid global-local identity.

In countries where the state has strong control of the media, whether through direct media ownership or through legislation, channels of communication for alternative views have become limited. Hence, people are forced to go underground via the new media. Social media is found to be much more effective compared to alternative news portals in shaping public opinion. An instance of this was in the Arab Spring where channels of communication were severely limited and the public had lost trust in the government and the mainstream media. Social media became the only source of information for the people, and also a space where they could express their views.

In Malaysia, social media contributed to what has been termed as the *political tsunami* during the 2008 general election, which saw the hegemony of the National Coalition (Barisan Nasional or BN) government slowly crumble. BN’s political opponent, then known as Alliance of Hope (Pakatan Harapan or PH), continued underground since it was being excluded from the mainstream media. Social media became a tool for PH’s cybertroopers and strong supporters to propagate their views to the people. Using their Facebook fan pages, thorny issues like the Goods and Services Tax (GST), high cost of living, and purported corrupt practices of the BN government were highlighted systematically. This led to a discussion among the citizens and created a public sphere. Bloggers who were strong supporters of the Alliance used their blogs to shape public opinion in their favor. In the recently-concluded fourteenth general election, WhatsApp began to be used as a campaign tool in addition to Twitter and Facebook. Unlike Facebook, WhatsApp reaches individuals personally. A public sphere was created among individuals within their What-

sApp chat group to discuss PH’s campaign messages. It was perhaps this very well-orchestrated campaign strategy where PH focused on specific issues and communicated it repeatedly that saw it overthrow the 61-year-old BN government. BN was slow in turning to the social media, as it controlled the mainstream media. The outcome of PH’s communication strategy was that it won 113 Parliament seats out of 222, while BN only managed to secure 79 seats in the May 9, 2018 election.

When it comes to the question of social media, press freedom, and democracy, social media is a double-edged sword. While it opens more doors for freedom of expression and self-empowerment, it also paves the way for fake news to be created and go viral. Fake news has become a major issue among Malaysians. In the recent general election, voters were inundated with fake news rather than with authentic news reports in the social media. With fake news distorting information to perfection, it ultimately denies citizens the right to know the truth. The overreliance on social media as the sole source of information further contributed to the thriving of fake news because citizens rarely cross-check facts. The government’s attempt to address the issue by passing the Anti-Fake News Act in 2018 failed to clearly define what constituted “fake” when it came to news. In any case, the Act appears short-lived, as the new government has announced its intention to repeal it.

Another threat that social media poses now is when the political fanaticism of supporters of the dominant class reigns over other views in cyberspace. Those with alternative positions are subject to cyberbullying, so much so that it demotivates them from participating in democratic discussion, while others are traumatized by the hostile response from political fanatics. Even if some of the points raised are sound, political fanatics rally together and condemn such users with vulgarity, denying their right and freedom to express their opinion. This lack of civility and rationality at the level of ordinary people douses their spirit to engage in a healthy discussion of public issues.

For the social media to become an effective tool for true democracy, civility and media literacy must first become a norm and culture among citizens. Citizens must be made to understand the meaning of rational communication. Only then can genuine reformation of the nation take place through exchange of ideas. ■

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> Democratic Retreat in Argentina

by **Esteban Torres Castaños**, National University of Cordoba and CONICET (National Scientific and Technical Research Council), Argentina



The new economic crisis has brought along new challenges for democracy in Argentina. Flickr/Alex Proimos. Some rights reserved.

The Argentine Republic is experiencing a remarkable retreat of democracy. The extension and complexity of this retreat is difficult to understand if using the theories of democracy that, with the collapse of the military dictatorships, have become the dominant analytical frameworks for left and progressive forces in the country and in Latin America. Contemporary democratization, understood as a social process of expansion of the forces of public appropriation, is comprised of three critical vectors: a techno-political vector, a techno-economic vector, and a techno-communicational vector. Each of them consists of a handful of dimensions. Here I would like to simply describe the key events that have been precipitating the structural retreat of democracy in Argentina in 2018. These events are associated with the political repressive dimension of the above-mentioned political vector and with one of the paramount dimensions of the techno-economic vector for a peripheral

country: the degree of autonomy of the state to define its macroeconomic policy.

As regards the political repressive dimension, the two main events that reinforce each other are 1) the national executive power's decision to establish, by decree, a doctrinal and functional transformation of the Armed Forces and 2) the support from the government itself to establish US military bases in different parts of the national territory.

Regarding the first event, the pillar of the transformation that the executive power promotes with Decree N° 683/2018 is the authorization for the Armed Forces to be able to perform homeland security tasks. With this, the barrier between homeland security and national defense gets practically dissolved, which reinforces the government's intention to criminalize the social protests that have been expanding throughout the country since the victory of Cam-

biemos (the ruling coalition) in December 2015. With this measure, Mauricio Macri's government seeks to put the Armed Forces at the service of an "anti-drug trafficking and anti-terrorist program" through which it fully aligns with the US foreign policy agenda. With the implementation of this new decree, Decree N° 1691/2006 is abolished, and the legal framework consisting of the National Defense Laws (1998), the Homeland Security Laws (1992) and the National Intelligence Laws (2001) is meant to be fractured. These regulations, the result of three decades of democratic expansion, were built from multiparty consensus unprecedented in their magnitude in national history.

Regarding the second event, the government is promoting the establishment of US military bases on Argentinean land, whose technical direction is in the hands of the US Southern Command. Three locations have been identified so far: the Triple Border (Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay), Tierra del Fuego (Ushuaia) and the province of Neuquén. Both events get reinforced by a third: the arrival of US troops on national territory this year, to carry out joint exercises with local forces. As the authorities from both countries have declared, those exercises are being performed with the aim of offering information "against weapons of mass destruction trafficking." The arrival of foreign troops requires the authorization of the National Congress, but such an authorization has not been requested by the ruling party.

Along with these events, it is necessary to pay attention to a second series of events that has caused, in record time, the national state's total loss of autonomy to formulate macroeconomic policies. I refer to the external hyper-indebtedness policy that Macri's government has been displaying. The two key indicators here are the evolution of the external debt vis-à-vis the GNP of Argentina and the characteristics of the commitments made with the creditors. As regards the former, it is possible to observe that Cambiemos has triggered the fastest growth of external debt in national history within the framework of a new regime of financial value. Under Kirchner governments (2003-2015), state economic policies aimed to reduce external indebtedness through taking a hard line in negotiations with creditors. The relative success of such negotiations allowed for the promotion of the productive economy. To a great extent, it also allowed for the abandonment of the 1976-2001 model of financial value. From December 2015 onwards, Macri's government has returned to a compulsive external indebtedness as a key

means to relaunch the system of financial value. The ratio of external public debt to GNP has been increasing since 2011, when it represented 14.2%, its lowest level since the restoration of democracy in 1983. From that moment onwards, the debt has started to grow, and has soared under Macri's accelerated hyper-indebtedness policies until reaching 65.5% of GNP in June 2018. Thus, the indebtedness coefficient in Argentina has gone from low to difficult-to-manage levels in record time. The total issuance of debt in local and foreign currencies has reached the equivalent of almost USD 133 billion, which has turned the country into the biggest sovereign debt issuer among the emerging economies of the world for the period 2016-18.

Regarding the relationship with creditors, the main event in this new cycle of indebtedness is the decision to reestablish the subjection link with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after fourteen years of having settled debts with that organization. The return to the IMF is materialized with the request of a standby loan. The novelty of this large loan (USD 50 billion) when compared with former standby loans signed by Argentina and the IMF is that not only tax and monetary targets but also inflation will be supervised this time. In this way, Macri's presidency practically delegates the management of the national economy to the IMF. In so doing, it becomes the executing hand of the monetaristic neoliberal adjustment program requested by the IMF.

The policies of homeland militarization and *express* hyper-indebtedness are eroding national sovereignty and causing massive resistance and demonstrations throughout the national territory. The opposition forces involve a broad spectrum of social actors that are damaged or excluded from society by this regressive social transformation. Although the relationship of power between the advocates of democratization and the advocates of the new regime of globalized private macro-appropriation is remarkably unequal in favor of the latter, the national political future in the medium term is unpredictable. It is necessary to bear in mind that it is not enough to simply describe the current process of democratic erosion. The point is to explain the phenomenon from a multidimensional perspective of democracy subsumed into a new social theory of appropriation and sociohistorical change. Such an explanatory device will allow us to redefine a new left program of social change that addresses the social game of appropriation into which we are immersed. We will have to achieve it before it is too late for democracy. ■

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> The Erasure of Women from Egypt's Revolution

by **Amy Austin Holmes**, The American University in Cairo, Egypt, and visiting scholar at Harvard University, USA



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Mesmerized by the spectacle of mass protests on Tahrir Square, the Arab Spring has led to a renewed interest in the study of revolutions. Despite the outpouring of literature, women often appear to be missing in action. H.A. Hellyer's book *A Revolution Undone* begins with a glossary of 27 important figures in the Egyptian revolution. Only one woman is mentioned in the glossary, alongside 26 men. Philip Marfleet's *Egypt: Contested Revolution* features a woman on the cover, but not many women are included in his analysis. Other scholars include women primarily as victims of harassment or violence, but not as protagonists that mattered in shaping the unfolding events. In order to find women in the sea of literature on the Arab Spring, one must search in subfields dedicated to gender studies, as they are often absent from the books that claim to offer general overviews of the uprisings. As a resident of Cairo who has lived in Egypt since 2008, I saw women at every protest, at every sit-in, at virtually every event I witnessed. But women are being erased from the history of the Egyptian revolution. Future generations may believe that women were unimportant actors in the events known as the Arab Spring. But nothing could be farther from the truth.

Women did not just advocate for women's rights. Women were often at the forefront of Egypt's revolutionary activism, from the time of the Mubarak dictatorship through the years of upheaval, until the present day when the regime has reconfigured itself under President Sisi. Back in 2005, in an attempt to prevent fraud and introduce an element of accountability in Egypt's authoritarian system, three women founded a group that monitored the presidential and parliamentary elections. They called themselves *Shayfeencom*, which translates to "we are watching you." One of the founders, Bouthaina Kamel, later went on to be the first woman to run for president in the history of modern Egypt. Prior to the revolution, the Nadeem Center was Egypt's only center dedicated to treating victims of torture, and it was founded by a woman: Dr. Aida Seif El-Dawla. And who made the video that went viral one week before January 25, 2011, which catalyzed millions of people to come to the streets and protest? Also a woman: Asmaa Mahfouz of April 6 Youth Movement.

After Mubarak was ousted, the country was ruled for a year-and-a-half by a military junta known as the Supreme Council of Armed Forces. As I have argued elsewhere, one



Bouthaina Kamel (pictured) above Tahrir Square on January 28, 2011. She became the first woman to run for president in Egypt. Copyright: Amy Austin Holmes.

of the most radical demands of the revolution was to end military rule. This was not about reform or incremental change or the removal of a mere dictator from office, but a call to fundamentally change the structure of the state: to introduce civilian rule in a country governed by the military since its founding in 1952. The Egyptian military is based on universal male conscription. Women are thereby excluded from the most powerful institution in the country. It may not be a coincidence that many of the leading activists in these anti-military groups were women. The No Military Trials group demanded an end to the practice of subjecting civilians to military tribunals. Some of the leading figures in this group included Shahira Abou Leil and Mona Seif. Another group exposed many of the human rights violations committed by the military through video screenings in public spaces. This group was called *Askar Kazeboon*, which means Soldiers are Liars, and was co-founded by Sally Toma, a Coptic Christian woman.

It was often women who shattered societal taboos by speaking about the unspeakable violence inflicted on both

women and men. It was Samira Ibrahim who broke the silence around the military's practice of conducting virginity tests on detained women. Heba Morayef, who was the Human Rights Watch country director for Egypt at the time and the only woman to be included in Hellyer's glossary, led the campaign to end the practice of virginity tests. Women have also played a leading role in advocating for the rights of men. Dalia Abdel Hamid, a researcher at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), was one of the few people inside Egypt who denounced the crackdown on the LGBTQ community in the fall of 2017, including the forced anal exams on men who were suspected of being homosexual.

Women have been at the forefront of Egypt's oppositional media landscape. Lina Attallah was the founder and editor-in-chief of *Mada Masr*, a news website that *The Guardian* in 2015 described as keeping press freedom alive in Egypt. For their dangerous truth-telling, *Mada Masr* was one of the first websites to be blocked in 2017 and is still censored more than a year later.

The new generation of Nubian activists features several prominent women. Fatma Emam worked on the constitution-drafting committee and succeeded in having Nubia mentioned for the first time in the Egyptian constitution. As a blogger and researcher, she continues to raise awareness about sensitive issues, including the military's seizure of traditional Nubian lands along the border with Sudan. In the spring of 2017, Seham Osman, a young woman from Aswan, was the first woman to announce her intention to run for president of the General Nubian Union, before she had to withdraw after coming under severe pressure.

Finally, one of Egypt's most well-known human rights lawyers is Mahienour El Massry. She is known for defending the rights of all Egyptians, including 21 female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, although she herself was an outspoken critic of the Brotherhood. She has also defended Syrian refugees, and insisted on sleeping next to them in police stations to ensure that they were not tortured or mistreated. In 2014, she received the Ludovic Trarieux human rights award; Nelson Mandela won the same award in 1985.

A short commentary like this cannot do justice to the topic. There are simply too many women to mention all of them. Nermin Allam's *Women and the Egyptian Revolution* is one place to look for a more detailed analysis. But I hope to have shown that women did not just advocate for women's rights. They were an integral part of the larger struggle. To erase women from the history of the revolution, or to relegate them to the field of gender studies, is to perpetuate the patriarchal structures they rebelled against. ■

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> Global Governance: A Concept for a Democratic World Order?

by **Peter Wahl**, executive board member, World Economy, Ecology & Development Association (WEED), Berlin, and co-founder, Attac Germany, Germany



Illustration by Arbu.

In the 1990s a concept started its career: global governance. This promised a new and more democratic type of international system as well as globalization with a human face. The trajectory of the concept teaches interesting lessons.

First of all: *governance* is not *government*. Its French original, *gouverner*, means steering, directing, regulating. In substance, the following key points are linked to the concept:

- The economic process of globalization has escaped political regulation. This is due to the triumph of neoliberalism, which relies on self-regulation of markets, liberalization, privatization, and deregulation.
- New global problems have arisen, such as global warming, the solution to which lies beyond the ability of individual nation-states.
- Conventional international problems, such as collective security, the arms race, nuclear non-proliferation, etc., need fresh approaches.
- New forms of political regulation are necessary through a mix of formal and binding agreements, non-binding standard setting, voluntary agreements, and multilateral networks, which together combine to form a *regime*.
- All this needs a new type of interaction between the actors in the international system, i.e., governments, multilateral institutions, the business sector, and civil society. Inclusion, cooperation, dialogue, networking, negotiation, and balancing of interests are key instruments.

With the end of the Cold War the concept seemed to have a realistic chance of implementation. *Global governance* met the zeitgeist and became popular. The Rio conference of the UN in 1992, the biggest conference in history, with more than 100 heads of state and a massive participation of civil society, may be seen as a symbol of this. Rio was the breakthrough of the narrative of “one world,” which could

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connect equally with liberal cosmopolitanism and left-wing internationalism.

However, disillusion came soon. Already at the first stocktaking conference five years later it was obvious that the globalization of neoliberal capitalism did not keep its promises. There was no flood of prosperity, raising small boats and big steamers alike. Instead, too many losers were produced. Interestingly, many of them were in the advanced economies – with consequences, which we see in all their dimensions only today, when many of the losers have turned to the extreme right. As the spectacular protest at the Seattle World Trade Organization meeting in 1999 indicated, more and more people realized the downsides of globalization, among them the threats to social equity, the environment, and democracy.

In other words, the dynamics of the capitalist market economy prevailed. In 2008, the belief that financial markets would be efficient and could regulate themselves definitively turned out to be a myth. Finance capitalism had run out of control, leading to the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression. *Global governance* had not even been able to influence the process, not to speak of turning the tide.

But it was not only in the economic sphere where the *global governance* approach could not deliver. The spirit of *global governance* did not work in international relations either. Thus, the enlargement of NATO to the East was initiated in 1997 against Yeltsin's Russia. When, in 1999, NATO started its war in former Yugoslavia without a UN mandate, an entire series of acts of unilateral power politics and violations of international law was initiated. It continued with the "war on terror" after 9/11, the attack on Iraq with a global "coalition of the willing," the unilateral independence of Kosovo under the shield of NATO in 2008, and the regime change in Libya in 2011. All this is the opposite of the *global governance* approach.

Against this background, it is not surprising that counter-reactions emerged. In particular, Russia and increasingly China felt encouraged to step out of line of the post-Cold War order. This is not just a temporary phenomenon. It is grounded in a deepgoing tectonic transformation of the international system. We are now witnessing the transition to a polycentric world order. Its basic features are China's rise to a superpower, the comeback of Russian state capitalism as a big power, the shift of the planet's economic

center of gravity towards Asia, and a (relative) erosion of US and Western dominance.

The newcomers organize in variable compositions and on different issue-based alliances among themselves, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or the BRICS. They establish multilateral financial institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as an alternative to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and envisage huge economic and infrastructure projects like the *New Silk Road*. This is accompanied by the emergence of parallel structures in the world economy, such as an alternative system to SWIFT – the electronic neural system of global finance – by China and Russia, and a credit card system of their own that breaks the global monopoly of Mastercard, Visa, and American Express. Trade agreements increasingly replace the US dollar through bilaterally-agreed clearing units, undermining one of the pillars of US hegemony. In other words, there is an alternative type of reaction to globalization, which is based on the idea of countervailing power. One element is a kind of "selective de-globalization."

Of course, the upcoming world order comes with new risks. As always in such circumstances, competition between the newcomers and the long-established players leads to conflicts and instability. With the arrival of the Trump administration and its extremist unilateralism to "make America great again," the risks have acquired a new quality.

If we ask why *global governance* did not work, the main reasons are:

- blindness regarding power relations in the political economy of globalized capitalism, or as Marx would have put it, the *silent violence of economic relations*;
- blindness regarding power relations in the international system; and
- underestimation of the inertia of the nation-state as the still-dominant framework for the organization of capitalist society.

Global governance was from the beginning too idealistic a concept. Nevertheless, the idea of international cooperation is still valid and should not be given up by critical social theory – and praxis. But a closer look at who is cooperating *with whom* as well as *against whom* and a realistic assessment of the balance of power will be required if viable alternatives are to be developed. ■

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> The Intellectual *Par Excellence*

by **Nicolás Lynch**, National University of San Marcos, Peru



| Aníbal Quijano in 2015. Creative Commons.

Aníbal Quijano (1928-2018) has been the critical intellectual *par excellence* in Peru and Latin America, one who acted according to his principles. When he emerged as a sociologist in the 1960s and 1970s, criticism of the status quo was at its peak. Quijano never gave in to the si-

ren calls of the Marxism-Leninism that reached its most barbaric expression in the Shining Path. In the 1990s, at the height of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's influence, his condemnation of the subalternization of certain social categories eventually brought him to make a crucial contribution towards explaining

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the processes at work in contemporary Peru and in Latin America at large.

Quijano mainly worked as a professor and researcher at his home university of San Marcos in Lima, Peru, as well as at a number of other universities in Latin America and the US. As a result of his brief incursion into direct politics in the 1970s with the journal *Sociedad y Política*, he was deported to Mexico by the military government of Juan Velasco Alvarado, thus emerging as a public intellectual deeply committed to the struggles of the peoples of Peru and Latin America. He would indeed dedicate his life to finding out why the social and political processes which shape our society are the way they are, and to exploring the mechanisms for their transformation.

The first aspect of his contribution is epistemological. Quijano provides an explanation “from the South” for social processes in the region. In doing so, he breaks away from the tradition/modernity dichotomy derived from functionalist sociology and makes a case for historical-structural heterogeneity as the main narrative. He sees a set of forms of production co-existing in Latin American societies, organized around capital as a phe-

nomenon which is not only national but also transnational and, eventually, global.

Quijano thereby tackled the issue of Latin America’s condition of dependency. Although he refused to refer to a so-called “dependency theory,” it is obvious that he is part of the narrative inaugurated by Raúl Prebisch and CEPAL (ECLAC in English) in the 1950s and then continued by Cardoso and Faletto and finally by Ruy Mauro Marini in the 1960s and 1970s. His engagement with the debate that emerged at the time, with different contributions on urban planning and the workforce, masterfully culminated three decades later with his global characterization of Latin America through the concept of the coloniality of power.

But Quijano also made a highly significant contribution to questions of Latin American identity: from his contribution on the process of *cholificación* in the early 1970s in Peru, to his revival of the writings of José Carlos Mariátegui – the great Latin American critical Marxist thinker of the 1930s – and his particular sympathy for the struggles of the indigenous peoples and the concept of the

buen vivir currently fostered by various ethnic movements.

His contribution on the issue of identity is based on the concept of race. In Quijano’s view, this concept originates with the European colonization of what came to be called America, and becomes a central element in the classification of the social hierarchy prevailing in the region. Identity is built around race, and so is domination. Along with dependency, the concept of race was to be key in the construction of the coloniality of power. Quijano argues that the coloniality of power entails an external domination, of an empire over a colony or neocolony, but also an internal domination, of the ruling elite over the rest of the society – precisely due to a differential racial construction. Thus the coloniality of power becomes the main challenge for the formation of genuinely national and plurinational states in Latin America.

As we can see here, Aníbal Quijano’s theoretical creativity and his position within the tradition of autonomous social thought in the region have made him a landmark figure in the sociology of Peru and the wider continent. ■

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> The Joy of the Warrior

by **Raquel Sosa Elízaga**, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico

The hero of a thousand battles, Aníbal Quijano was taken by surprise when the University of Costa Rica conferred on him the title of Doctor *honoris causa*. He was even more surprised when a packed auditorium gave him a standing ovation. He warmly thanked the authorities and academics for “having familiarized themselves with his work”; and emphasized his thanks as he shared the thought that the recognition was due to a way of life “that gives meaning to what one writes and what one thinks.” With extreme humility and simplicity he offered the public what he considered to be his life’s motto: “Live within and against.” And he added: “There is no other way to live in a world that brings together power, exploitation, and violence.”

I met Aníbal Quijano many more years ago than I remember, in my home country, where he arrived as an exile in the mid-1970s. His anti-imperialist thought and struggle; his conviction regarding the need to ground social knowledge in the demands and struggles of the peoples of America, Asia, and Africa; his empathy with the struggles of women, young people, indigenous peoples, migrants, displaced people, and refugees throughout the world, all led him to set out on innumerable journeys and to become recognized and welcomed in places where academics rarely set foot.

His long history of defiance forced him, when he was back in his native Peru at the start of the 1990s, to re-

“His life’s motto was: Live within and against”

nounce his chair at the University of San Marcos after the dictator Fujimori ordered the military to seize control of the University. So it was that once more he found refuge at the Binghamton University, and in Paris, and in other places too; and it was not until the start of the second decade of this century that the Ricardo Palma University in Peru generously offered him a place for what were to be his last years of battle. His whole life was one of untiringly organizing and participating in events that were academic, political, and educational, and constantly reaching out to the people; always formative and always demonstrating great solidarity. He wrote brilliant chapters in collaboration with many intellectuals and academics who participated with him in the World Social Forum, including Immanuel Wallerstein and Pablo González Casanova, his intimate friends.

His vision of the coloniality of power, for which he has been recognized at all latitudes of the planet, stems from a struggle that is both political and academic. In fact, I would say that it constitutes a moral call and indeed a demand to raise one’s sights and one’s dignity, in order no longer to be subjects of the powers that be, whether foreign or domestic. It is a call to turn instead to knowl-

edge, a tool and unrelenting weapon to search out true routes of transformation, to the benefit of the vilified, deprived, excluded, and abandoned people of the world.

Just as with his predecessors Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and especially José Carlos Mariátegui, Aníbal Quijano brought genuine historical meaning to his work, based on vehemently demonstrating the way in which the world has been transformed since the sixteenth century, as racism and slavery have been converted into the driving economic forces of capitalist development. The understanding and denouncing of this cycle of oppression and alienation that has not ceased to this day, became the constant theme of his life. Aloof from trends and celebrations, without feeling the pain of periods of isolation or incomprehension, personal privation or political persecution, his was the joy of the warrior. He was someone who was happy because he knew that he was fighting for a cause that was greater than he was. And he enjoyed life, beauty, his family and his friends, with all the intensity that his own longevity allowed him to. Let us celebrate his tremendous example, his determination, and his integrity! ■

> Key Features of Post-Apartheid Poverty

by **Joshua Budlender**, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA



*Frederik Willem De Klerk and Nelson Mandela at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1992.
Copyright: World Economic Forum.*

It has become a truism to note that while South Africa's black majority achieved political freedoms with the end of apartheid in 1994, substantive economic freedoms have remained unrealized. This refrain is however often stated in very general terms, or in the context of specialized study of very particular phenomena. Here I draw together wide-ranging evidence in order to establish what has changed and what has not when it comes to the question of widespread material poverty in South Africa.

> The incidence of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa

The first and most basic point to be made is that the proportion of the South African population typically classified as "income poor" has hardly changed in the post-apartheid period. Specific numbers depend on the poverty line used, but usually between 50% and 65% of the population is considered "poor," with these aggregate numbers only a

few percentage points improved from 1994. The incidence of poverty is still sharply delineated along the racial lines of the census classification, with 73% of black Africans, 48% of Coloureds, 12% of Indians/Asians, and 2% of whites falling below the most recent poverty line.

The little reduction in poverty there has been is mostly due to the massive post-apartheid expansion of government "social grants" – monthly unconditional cash transfers targeted to certain categories of the poor. For the poorest 40% of households in South Africa, social grants now typically constitute more than half of total household income.

The other main improvement in material conditions in the post-apartheid period concerns some non-income facets of material deprivation. Large public programs have dramatically increased access to running water, electricity, and schooling, while malnutrition and mortality have notably declined. Improvements in these areas partly reflect

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extreme apartheid-era neglect and deprivation, but substantial advances are undeniable, especially in rural areas.

Despite these material improvements, however, extreme poverty remains widespread in the countryside, especially in what used to be apartheid-era “homelands.” When deprivation indices are used to map poverty across South Africa, the areas of highest deprivation often perfectly trace the former homeland boundaries, demonstrating an enduring legacy more than two decades since these areas were formally reincorporated into South Africa.

Poverty is of course not just a rural problem, however. Households in informal urban areas have slightly better chances of moving out of poverty than their rural counterparts, but nonetheless face significant structural barriers. Apartheid-era planning forced urban black workers and their families to move to distant city peripheries, far from the jobs and amenities of well-developed urban cores. Post-apartheid, this pattern has been entrenched by strong protections of private property rights and government policy, which has led to state-subsidized housing being built on cheap peripheral land. Exacerbated by under-serviced public transport systems, South African workers have long commute times and pay high commuting costs; these lead to effective “transport taxes” of as much as 40% of workers’ wages. “Apartheid cities” also seem to make it harder for peripheral residents to find employment in the first place.

> Too few jobs and too low wages

South Africa’s dysfunctional labor market more broadly is at the heart of the persistence in post-apartheid poverty. Unemployment attracts media and policymaker attention, which is unsurprising given its extraordinary heights. According to the global “narrow” definition of unemployment, the South African unemployment rate has tended to hover between 25% and 30%. According to the “broad” definition – which makes more sense in the South African context – unemployment has fluctuated around 40%.

Mass unemployment on this scale clearly should not be underplayed. It has, however, often diverted attention away from the very low wages, which prevail in South Africa. Of those South African households which have a wage-earner in the household, half fall below the most recently calculated South African poverty line (88% of households with no wage-earners fall below the same poverty line). While wages have increased at the top of the distribution, median wages have remained stagnant in real terms since 1994. Ethnographic evidence increasingly shows that South African workers frequently quit their jobs because wages are too low to justify the combination of material and psychological costs (such as commuting costs and experiences of disrespect, respectively) that these jobs entail – even if that means becoming unemployed.

What are the causes of high unemployment and low wages? A favorite explanation is poor quality education. According to this theory, South Africa is experiencing a “skills mismatch,” where employers increasingly need high-skilled workers but the basic education system is too dysfunctional to produce these workers. It is certainly true that despite dramatically increased rates of enrolment, the South African basic education system is in a state of unmitigated crisis with, for example, eight out of every ten grade 4 students unable to read for meaning. But education cannot explain the whole story.

An issue which must be recognized is deficient demand for labor from the private sector. With the end of apartheid and the collapse of influx control in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the supply of labor increased dramatically as black South Africans previously confined to the homelands could now seek better lives in the cities. The demand for labor in this period did not keep up with the growth in its supply, leading to a structural unemployment gap which persists to this day. While business frequently complains that onerous regulation makes hiring risky, administrative data shows that the South African private sector is characterized by exceptionally high levels of worker churning. At the same time, deficient demand for labor can also be linked to low levels of private sector fixed investment. Late-apartheid practices of business expansion by acquisition rather than productive investment have been replaced by corporate unbundling, large shareholder payouts and the shifting of capital abroad, but lack of interest in domestic productive investment remains.

> Precarity and dynamic poverty

Since 1994 South Africa has followed global trends of outsourcing and “labour broking,” leading to the increasing prevalence of precarious forms of work. Dynamic analysis of South African poverty shows that 40% of non-poor households are “vulnerable” – they face serious risks of falling into poverty into the future – while 80% of poor households are classified as “chronically poor” due to their negligible prospects of poverty exit.

The truism that substantive economic freedom remains unrealized in South Africa is trite for very good reason: the reality speaks for itself. A point which deserves greater consideration in South Africa, however, is the extent to which addressing this problem requires fundamental restructuring of the apartheid economy which is still with us. There is no doubt that the further expansion of social grants and basic services would constitute progressive action. However it is the South African labor market which is at the heart of the economy’s dysfunction, and it is within this sphere where interventions need to be aimed if apartheid path dependency is to be disrupted. ■

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> Post-Bailout Welfare:

New Landscapes of Poverty in Greece

by **Vassilis Arapoglou**, University of Crete, Greece



Poverty is painted on the walls of vacated homes while sleeping on the streets becomes a daily reality for many people.

Credit: Vassilis Arapoglou.

After eight years of imposed harsh austerity, the Greek government anticipated the post-bailout era and promoted its “Growth Strategy for the Future,” a plan that was negotiated with the Eurogroup, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund together with discussions over enhanced forms of fiscal surveillance following the exit from financial assistance programs. The plan underlines the Greek ownership of the reforms and attempts to bring into the agenda the priorities for “fair and inclusive growth.”

This brief note assesses the plan’s claims to policy success by placing them within a wider time-space framework and by contrasting them to the findings of my recent research on poverty in Greek cities. The “post-bailout” talk may be considered as a distinctive moment towards “post-

welfare,” a strategy of decentralization of social provisions, progressing at a different pace in many countries globally, and adopted by the European Commission to ameliorate labor market deregulation and the contraction of social entitlements. Post-welfare involves the reshaping of local state, market, and civil society relationships in the design of social safety nets and social inclusion programs. The de-centering of social policy responsibilities creates a political arena for competing strategies. On the one hand, a neo-liberal strategy aims at transforming local and voluntary agencies, and their clients, into human capital investors and responsible consumers of social services. On the other, progressive strategies aim at countering this top-down project of subsuming welfare and the civil society to the rules of the market. Advocacy coalitions aim at integrating the knowledge and claims of grassroots initiatives, ena-

bling them to access local assets and funding to develop their activities in new fields like health and social care, housing, the digital economy, and urban ecology.

In Greece, the first two bailout agreements constituted a deliberate attempt to devalue the labor power and the assets of the working people. The dramatic deterioration of living conditions which began in 2010 has been halted during the last two years, but this situation cannot be fully repaired given the way European capitalism is currently organized. The poverty rate in 2016, when calculated by the standards of 2008, is close to 50%. This actually means that half of the Greek population lives in poverty if we use the standards of 2008 in the country. But even if one uses the current income standards, almost half of the population aged less than 25 years is either poor, severely deprived, or unemployed. Part-time work among young people has exploded: one out of four employees under 25 works part-time and one out of five falls into the ranks of the working poor. Greece has exited the bailout agreements with increased inequality and about half of its young population in an impoverished or precarious living condition. New poverty most of all has affected the younger generations, immigrants, and city dwellers.

Findings from recent research (as shown in my recent book *Contested Landscapes of Poverty and Homelessness in Southern Europe: Reflections from Athens* that I co-wrote with Kostas Gounis) illustrate how stopgap measures have dominated local anti-poverty policies. The introduction of a “social solidarity income” scheme has been assigned a central role in the devolution of social services but income assistance is meagre and subject to many conditions in a harsh workfarist manner. Depleted of resources, local and civil agencies have been forced to redesign social inclusion so as to attract private funding. It should be emphasized that the bailout programs did not only dismantle already feeble and inadequate forms of support but also shaped a specific trajectory towards privatizing public provisions and enabling charity.

What was most upsetting was the finding that an artificial division was often made between the “new poor,” the ones the lay middle class citizen could identify with (since they represented the risk of a common fate of destitution), and the marginalized others – drug addicts, the mentally ill, illicit migrants, and people on the move. In this respect, a pitfall of local policy responses has not only been their failure to address material destitution, but also the inscription of symbolic divisions amongst the destitute as a means to avoid guilt and fear.

In contrast, pluralism within civil society has enabled the questioning of the logic of markets and old established practices of poverty relief. An atmosphere of hope has been dispersed across many more or less organized attempts to meet the needs of those who do not fit into administrative categories. Informal support has been a shield against the deepening of marginality and local solidarity initiatives have welcomed refugees in Greek cities against an ambivalent European immigration policy.

Yet “spontaneity” or “good will” is not adequate for change, especially when grassroots initiatives are confronted with suspicion by the European Union or have to operate in heavily bureaucratic surroundings. Contrary to widespread belief, it took years to accumulate knowledge in areas where civil society has been historically active, where the voluntary sector, professional associations, squatters, and grassroots initiatives co-operate, and where links to international advocacy organizations or movements have been established. Nonetheless, much of this capacity remains unexplored. Authoritarian and clientelist mentalities still survive amongst the members of ruling parties, using collective organizations as extensions of the state, devaluing social expertise, and silencing dissenting voices.

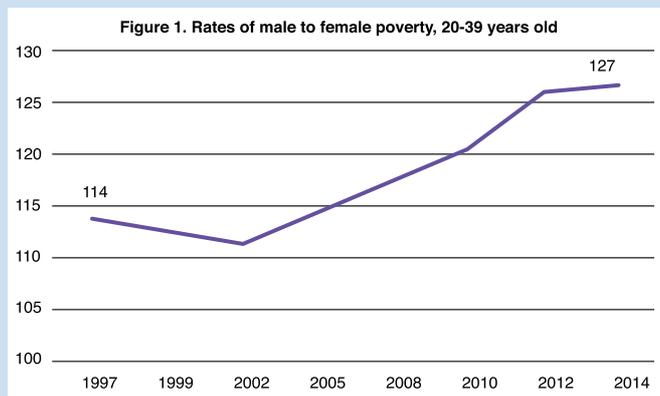
The Greek “strategy for fair and inclusive growth” may be viewed as an attempt to ameliorate policy fragmentation and reach a compromise with the European institutions over the future of post-welfare. Civil society organizations have criticized the formulation of the plan and negotiations with the Commission for lack of transparency. The plan does not set concrete objectives with regard to poverty reduction and praises the worth of targeted assistance, without assessing the social impact of the current low levels of support. Similarly, priorities for the “economic and social integration of youth” and for “a socially-oriented economy” are not supported by concrete measures. It is striking that the pressing issue of refugee and migrant integration is hardly mentioned. The plan identifies key areas of negotiation with the Commission, primarily the restoring of collective bargaining and a minimum wage, which have been a matter of concern for labor activists. Nonetheless, it will be extremely difficult to reverse key anti-labor legislation, and the taxation of low incomes and the young self-employed, and to postpone pension cuts, which have already been agreed with the lenders. Given such unfavorable conditions, local struggles for the political and economic enfranchisement of civil society are the only basis for optimism. ■

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> Why Are There More Poor Women in Latin America?

by **Juliana Martínez Franzoni**, University of Costa Rica, and member of ISA Research Committee on Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy (RC19)

Despite economic growth, electoral competition, and left turns, the rate of female poverty in Latin America increased from 114 to 127 for every 100 men (Figure 1). What went wrong for millions of women across the region?



Source: Own elaboration based on ECLAC data, CEPALSTAT, 2018.

> Context

Latin America is emerging from a “left turn” or “Pink Tide” that started in 1998 and lasted through the mid-2010s. Electoral competition gave progressive platforms wider influence and highlighted demands for progressive labor and social policies.

This shift to the left was the political outcome of citizens’ disillusionment with the unmet promises of earlier conservative governments. This disillusionment coincided with an economic boom. Although diverse, left-wing parties and their leaders voiced demands for change, especially in living conditions. By 2000, social outcomes and public policies advanced across the region.

> State action

The economic policies implemented during the Pink Tide entailed labor market policy reforms raising the real mini-

mum wage and increasing formalization. Social spending became a larger proportion of total public spending, increasing from 49% in 2000 to 58% in 2014. In per capita terms, it went from USD 687 in 2000 to USD 1,619 in 2014 as reported by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Although the magnitude of the increase varied across countries, the trend occurred across the region and was seen in both new and reformed programs.

Most social spending favored women’s access to state resources via transfers and services. A considerable number of state interventions across Latin America targeted women and mothers. Policy developments increased the proportion of women with their own income through Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) and extended pension coverage. These interventions improved women’s access to old-age benefits on their own terms as compared to benefits obtained as dependents of their husbands. Additionally, the length and coverage of maternity leaves increased and slowly began a reorganization of care beyond families and unpaid female, motherly work. With greater labor market participation, women’s lives were transformed.

> Labor markets and state incorporation

During the 2000s, aggregate female labor participation slowed due to a ceiling over women with tertiary education: highly educated women aged 24 to 59 experienced a nearly 90% labor force participation. Increases in female labor force participation would require the incorporation of less educated women. These women, however, faced structural obstacles to entering the labor market. The overall pattern of change was incomplete for all women but income inequality also became segmented among women.

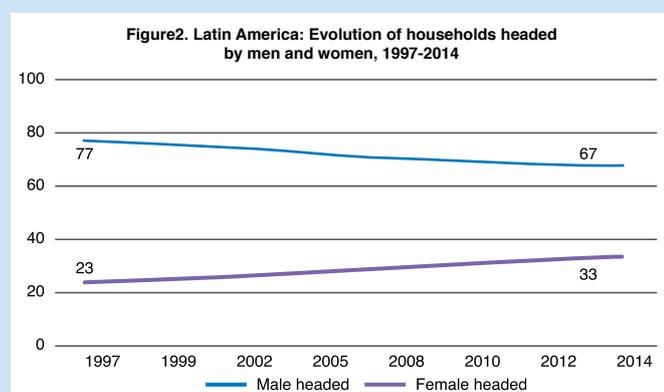
For different reasons, the incorporation of women into labor markets reached a plateau for both lower and higher income women by the early 2000s. Among the worst off, participation rates peaked due to the sexual division of labor, earlier and higher fertility, and limited resources to

access state services or purchase private market care services. The unchanged sexual division of labor meant highly educated women had already reached labor force participation rates similar to men's by lowering and postponing fertility and purchasing care services in the private market.

> Changed family arrangements

Latin American families also underwent deep transformations following the second demographic revolution. Diverse conjugal relations meant broader family entry and exit options and a better distribution of rights and responsibilities. Though fewer families in number, these were also unstable and prone to breakdown.

Across the region, nuclear families eroded as family arrangements declined and single-headed families, cohabitation, same-sex conjugal couples, and other family forms rose. Increased divorce rates are one indication of these transformations. Figure 2 shows the drop in the proportion of bi-parental, male-headed households versus the increase in the proportion of female-headed households. Family units are by definition cooperative as well as conflictive. Ongoing familial transformations challenge the cooperative aspect of families consisting of adults jointly nurturing and protecting each other and their offspring from social risks, highlighting the presence of old and novel conflicts. One of the consequences of these transformations is an increase in the number of children not living under the same roof as their father.



Source: Based on ECLAC data.

The transformation of families bears significant implications for all involved. National accounts show at least

60% of the consumption needs of Latin America's children and youth coming from private transfers. The economic maintenance and caregiving of children is connected to the lives of their mothers, usually the children's guardians. Women feed, nurture, take children to medical check-ups, and carry out a long list of child-rearing tasks. This hidden generation of need, value, and consumption happens within the family and is resolved through women's unpaid care and domestic work. Regional time-use surveys report this is the case regardless of income, age, and family arrangements.

Women experienced changes in labor market participation but men experienced little change in domestic participation. Women continue to perform between two and three times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. Moreover, when families unravel, few children stay with their fathers. Such persistent and unequal division of domestic labor has negative consequences for women's access to resources. Domestic burdens restrict women's labor market participation (e.g. paid working hours) and sustain occupational segregation to accommodate family needs. Income differences limit women's ability to partially turn their unpaid domestic work into paid home-based, also female, work – a core feature of Latin America's unequal care regime.

> Implications

Changed family arrangements, more fathers relinquishing roles beyond conjugal relations, and marginal direct state involvement in the material well-being of children together create a need for adaptive state laws and policies. States face challenges in developing policies capable of responding to the needs of an increasing number of divorced families, monoparental (mostly mono-maternal) households, dual-earner families, same-sex partners, and more children and women vulnerable to poverty. In addition, the legal recognition and equal rights of this broad range of family arrangements demand state interventions capable of enforcing cooperation across family arrangements and state intervention beyond anti-poverty cash transfers. Altogether, this is a new challenge for all political actors, left-wing parties included. ■

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> “Charity Economy”

In the Shadow of the Welfare State

by **Fabian Kessl**, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany



In Germany alone, millions of people are users of soup kitchens, charity clothes shops, food distribution points, and other food banks. Creative Commons.

In December 2017 the board of the local food bank (Tafel) in Essen (Germany) decided to restrict access for migrant users. Referring to the assumed misconduct of a young migrant man, the food bank revoked access for people without a German passport. This decision to restrict the access to a local food bank along ethnic lines has been discussed internationally and criticized heavily for its inherent racism. The case of Essen points to a shift in the social question. Instead of focusing on the differences and relations between “above and below” in a city like Essen, which is heavily polarized between the rich and the poor, a new difference is put on the agenda: the one between “in and out.” The opposition is now posed as being between the “needy and vulnerable *German* pensioner” and the “assertive young *non-German* man.” Even against the background of a democratic society, such a shift has to be discussed publicly as well as scientifically. What remains taken for granted in this new agenda, however, is the existence of local food banks in big European cities. Remarkably, the debate has only briefly touched the question why people in the 21st century are using a food bank in a country like Germany – or in other European as well as North-American countries – on a daily basis.

In Germany, official numbers on food aid are only available on the basis of the internal numbers of national associations, like the German Food Bank Association (Tafel Deutschland e.V.). The association reported that there were 934 local food banks in 2016, counting only their member organizations. If we take into account all the other organizations that distribute basic goods to “the needy,” we find a much larger system of poverty relief all around Europe – and beyond. In Germany alone, millions of people

are users of soup kitchens, charity clothes shops, food distribution points, and other food banks. Our own research showed that around 5,000 – 6,000 organizations can be found in just five out of the sixteen *Bundesländer* (German states). A new system of poverty relief has been established since the 1980s (or earlier as in the US). That system can be called a “new charity economy.”

The term “new charity economy” describes a distribution system in which basic goods are distributed for free or sold at discount prices to “the poor” or “the needy” through voluntary helpers or low-paid persons. This system relies on the provision of everyday consumer goods from one of three sources: industrial overproduction; goods that can no longer be sold due to factors such as statutory standardization specifications and marketing objectives; and goods that are no longer needed by private households.

The “new charity economy” targets groups of people who do not have the means or resources to participate in the capitalist system of goods distribution. However, this new economy is primarily distributing basic goods for day-to-day living. As such, it affects forms of support, which were once the exclusive responsibility of the welfare state and its agencies (as we knew them in Europe or North-America in the middle of the twentieth century). In the social security system of the welfare state, material supply gaps based on legal claims are primarily buffered through cash benefits and supplemented by social services. Yet the “new charity economy” places non-monetary benefits alongside statutory social insurance, supply, or welfare structures as a subsidy for the needy. Sometimes it even replaces them. In the case of replacement, users are referred to this new livelihood support service that is based on donations. Its availability is not based on entitlement, but on receiving charitable gifts (implying loyalty). The “new charity economy” is turning poverty reduction into poverty relief by changing the mode of delivering support: donors as well as helpers are acting on the basis of compassion instead of a “solidarity between strangers” (Hauke Bunkhorst). It is temporary attention to the misfortune of others and not a formal right to support that characterizes the “new charity economy.”

But it is not only a system of poverty relief on the basis of loyalty and compassion as we knew it historically from the early days of industrialism. The “new charity economy” has to be understood as a secondary economic system as well. Closely interconnected with the primary market, the char-

ity economy facilitates the transfer of surplus goods from the primary economy to a secondary system. This transfer also carries an economic benefit for those who donate the primary goods because they receive an equivalent profit for their donations. Food discounters for instance are still able to make a profit from donated goods, because (a) it reduces their disposal costs and allows possibly some tax savings; and (b) companies which are official contributors or sponsors can benefit and enhance their public image by making donations as a form of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The “new charity economy” therefore illustrates the existence of a massive and growing *shadow of the welfare state*. Contrary to the public image, food banks, soup kitchens, charity clothes shops, and such are not the only voluntary-based initiatives in civil society. Our research shows that in Germany 90% of the organizations in the “new charity economy” provide both material assistance and a broad spectrum of social services. Thus, there is a strong connection to the formal welfare state, which is also apparent from the financing of the charity economy: what can be found is often a mix of donations, sponsorship, public funds, membership fees, generated revenues, and/or service charges. Beside, providers of donation-based aid often execute means-testing, where existing welfare state regulations are often applied. In other words, what links the “new charity economy” to the service systems of the welfare state is also the assessment of the individual’s situation by the public administration. This is observable in the indirect collaboration between public social and welfare authorities and the services of the “new charity economy.” For instance, the staff at job centers and employment agencies will point out services, such as food distribution points, to needy persons who are applying for state benefits. Thus a new relationship of subsidiarity – whereby the smaller unit is expected to provide assistance before the next larger unit – is established. Public administration employees understand the services of the “new charity economy” as a supplement to – or even a substitute for – actual welfare state benefits, even though they have no basis in social law.

The “new charity economy” could well serve as a prime example of the new division of labor between the three sectors of civil society, economy, and the state whereby their respective boundaries and logics of action are blurred. We are thus on the road towards a fundamental shift in the traditional forms of support for people in need. ■

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> Food Security Discourse:

Challenges for the 21st Century

by **Mustafa Koç**, Ryerson University, Canada and member of ISA Research Committees on Sociology of Migration (RC31) and Agriculture and Food (RC40)



Food security emerged as a discourse during the global financial crisis in the mid-1970s as an international priority to address availability and accessibility of food for all. One of the most familiar definitions of food security was provided by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at the World Food Summit in 1996. According to this definition, food security “exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

Despite its wide recognition by international organizations such as FAO, food security has been a confusing concept with multiple definitions and differing priorities that has continued to change over the years. The conceptual perplexity of food security discourse reflects competing imaginations of how access to food should be managed in market economies as well as changes in the specific

ways the food system is organized, i.e., the policies and practices that define conditions of food provisioning in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Since the 1980s, the conceptualization of food security has gone through a revision in an environment of market liberalism, intensification of global economic relations, and restructuring of the economy and the state. Neoliberal policies that were adopted as a solution to the financial crisis of the 1970s led to cuts in spending on social programs and changes in the conditions of work, a shrinking of the role of the state in the economy, deregulation, privatization, and liberalization of trade. These changes led to a decline in unionized jobs in the manufacturing sector, and precarious and part-time employment mostly in the informal and service sectors. The decline in social programs made the situation worse, resulting in higher rates of poverty and food insecurity.

The neoliberal food security discourse included a shift from the rights-based language of the earlier era to a market-oriented one that identified food as a commodity, and food insecurity as a personal failure rather than a failure of the agri-food system. A 1993 World Bank document clearly reflected this shift: “In practice, however, food is a commodity.” As the social functions of the welfare state shrank and national social programs were downloaded to provincial and local governments, social assistance and care functions were increasingly left to civil society organizations (CSOs) and families. Philanthropic organizations, such as food banks, started filling the gap left from government-run social programs. First emerging in the United States in 1967, food banks lacked transparency and accountability, unlike social welfare agencies, yet began spreading across the world as important mechanisms of social security to provide “surplus food” to “surplus populations.”

In a market economy, products that have been produced for human consumption but cannot be sold in the

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market before their best before dates become surplus. Redistribution of the surplus food has been promoted as a solution to deal with food waste and food poverty. This seemingly noble concern, however, tends to ignore the role of government cuts in social assistance and the marketing imperatives of the agri-food companies in the rise of food insecurity. While it is true that up to 40% of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted between field and plate and reducing this waste could allow us to feed all the food insecure in the world, the causes of food insecurity are not due to shortages of food, but due to inequalities in access. At present, most of the world's grains and oilseeds are used as animal feed, biofuels, and industrial products such as high-fructose corn syrup, instead of food. The reduction of wasted food thus requires a critical re-examination of how the profit imperatives of the agri-food system and subsidies in certain sectors are simultaneously creating enormous surpluses of both food and hunger.

> Progress was not universal

At the World Food Summit in 1996, a commitment was made to reduce the number of undernourished people by half by 2015. At that time, the estimated number of food insecure was 799 million. In 2009, the estimated number of food insecure reached 1,023 billion. The FAO responded to this by changing their methodology in 2012. Even with this new methodology, the number of undernourished people could be reduced only to 815 million in 2015. Moreover, in Africa and the Middle East, the numbers of undernourished people show an increase due to wars and armed conflict. In recent decades, armed conflicts in different parts of the world have turned millions of people into food-insecure surplus populations. According to FAO 2017 estimates, about 60% of the 815 million chronically food-insecure and malnourished people in the world live in countries affected by conflict. About 75% of children suffering stunted growth as a result of malnutrition live in war-torn countries. The destruction of domestic economies, infrastructure, and major state institutions due to war has also caused millions of people to become refugees, while attempts to contain population movements within their respective regions have turned neighboring countries into refugee camps. The 6 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and the 5.6 million Syrians in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt are only two of the recent examples of mass regional population movements. While

refugees suffer long-term and chronic food insecurity and malnutrition, they also become a source of food insecurity and political instability in the host countries.

> Future threats to food security

By 2050, the world population is expected to reach 9 billion. As the developing economies adopt the wasteful consumption patterns of wealthier countries and armed conflicts across the world create new waves of refugees, the level of food insecurity can get worse. So far, we have relied on finding ways of increasing our productive capacity and improving the access to food for vulnerable segments of the population. Attempts to increase productive capacity through industrial farming methods led to increasing concentration of ownership in the hands of more efficient farmers and pushed millions of peasants and small farmers to the cities. Increasing use of agrochemicals also created major environmental problems, such as soil degradation, air and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. Agriculture contributes to an estimated 13% of the greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing impacts of climate change create another threat to production capacity around the world. While seeking new policies to improve the availability and accessibility of food and reduction of loss and waste, we may also need to question our diets, consumption patterns, and the organization of the agri-food system that has prevailed throughout the last century.

The emerging food sovereignty movement has been connecting farmers, workers, and eaters in an effort to work towards an alternative food system. While food sovereignty shares some insights with earlier discourses of food security, with its emphasis on the role of the states in defining conditions of food provisioning within national/local boundaries, it also includes a new sense of resistance to globalization. Different from the neoliberal interpretations of food security, the food sovereignty discourse recognizes food as a human right; underlines the importance of ownership and control of land, water, and genetic resources by local/indigenous peoples; emphasizes sustainability and resilience instead of efficiency in the production process; and rejects the use of food as a weapon. Like food security, food sovereignty discourse is also dynamic and fluid, shaped by changing political and economic histories. It will be interesting to watch what role food sovereignty plays in reconstructing public perception of food system priorities and redefining food security. ■

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> Global Modernity

by **Sujata Patel**, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, India and member of ISA Research Committees on History of Sociology (RC08), Urban and Regional Development (RC21), Conceptual and Terminological Sociology (RC35), Historical Sociology (RC56), and board member of RC08

Since the late 1990s, the term “global modernity” has been increasingly used in literature that debates the nature and content of theories of the globalizing world. The term itself combines two concepts, globalization and modernity, and rephrases the theories of each as they connect to each other.

Theories of global modernity initially emerged from mainstream sociological deliberations that interrogated the relevance of classical theories in assessing contemporary changes within the Global North. This question led to the formation of other questions, one of which was whether the modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s modeled on classical sociological positions and emulating the European experience could continue to be useful for the comprehension of the modernity being articulated across the globe. It was soon recognized that the modernization model in reality homogenized and made hegemonic the European experience by arguing that the institutional organization and cultural features representing the modernization process in Europe would replicate themselves across the world. What was needed, the scholarship suggested, was a perspective that displaced the convergence theory of modernity with one that recognized the differences organizing the modern experience across the various regions of the globe.

The acceptance of this position within mainstream sociology opened up a Pandora’s box. It allowed for interventions into this theme from a range of perspectives having distinct genealogies such as Weberian, Marxist, structuralist, and post-structuralist and juxtaposed these with others that had developed outside the Global North, termed indigenous and/or Southern theories. The entry of these new and novel standpoints extended the theme’s scope and reach, constituting it as a separate area of study and reflection. Presently the scholarly area defined as global modernity deliberates a wide number of concerns that are ontological, epistemological, and methodological regard-

ing the substantive theories of modernity, thereby opening up the fundamentals of the discipline of sociology to debate once again. In this short note, I outline three sets of perspectives that have emerged since the late 1980s and early 1990s. These are the theories of multiple modernities, indigenous and Southern theories, and the standpoint of decolonialism.

> Multiple modernities

The theory of multiple modernities has many variants and has involved many contributors. The term was conceptualized by Shmuel Eisenstadt, who in many ways has been the architect of this position and who linked modernity to civilization studies; however this perspective also involves interlocutors who avoid characterizing modernity as civilizational. What connects the scholars of this perspective together are the following assumptions: a) there is not one but many modernities, i.e. modernity is not singular but plural; b) though modernity’s institutional expressions may be similar, its differences are related to the distinct cultural backgrounds of each society; and c) to comprehend these differences there is a need to reframe classical sociological theories.

Thus multiple modernities scholarship first draws from European ideas and positions to ask historical and philosophical questions regarding the distinct ways different European experiences of modernity were organized. It then inquires whether these differences present a formulation to organize a framework for assessing the differences across the globe. Second, scholars try to query the constituents of modernity’s core as against its peripheries. Eisenstadt has argued that the core of modernity is human agency. He characterizes this agency as autonomous, rational, creative, and free. Third, if the core of human agency is that of rationality, how did this core manifest itself differently across the world? Eisenstadt argues that this core – rational human agency – has its origin in the distinct

“It is necessary to displace the scientific practices of Western science because these make the subject into an object of investigation”

religiosities of Axial civilizations. However it was in the Christian-European Axial civilization that the attributes of modernity emerged first and were later diffused. This Western model was not accepted in its original mold and pattern and its cultural attributes were selected, reinterpreted, and reformulated as these engaged with the received features of each Axial civilization. As a consequence, new core features emerged; these constituted later versions of modernities. Thus, while there will always be a convergence across the world with regard to the central aspects of institutionalization, such as occupational and industrial structures or those in education and city-formation, there will be differences in the way institutional dynamics and related problems develop as agency and structure interact with each other.

It has been suggested that the multiple modernities thesis contributed to the cultural turn in contemporary social theory. It is clear from the above that material processes find little to no representation in this discussion of modernity. Additionally, though this thesis argues for historicity, there is no reference to colonialism, its organization of modernity, its exploitative processes, and its relationship to knowledge systems and especially those of the social sciences. The perspectives addressed below tackle these issues.

> Indigenous and Southern theories

Indigenous theories start with the assumption that social sciences need to have autonomy to frame the epistemic concerns in their regions. They accept Raewyn Connell's argument that unequal power between the metropole and the periphery organized social sciences and that this has led to the universalization of Northern theories and their viewpoints, perspectives, and problems. Within Southern scholarship two concepts assess this process. The first is “extroversion” as conceptualized by Paulin Hountondji who defines it as externally oriented social sciences. The other is “academic dependency,” as conceived by Syed Farid Alatas. The latter argues that Western knowledge is imposed on the rest of the world. It thus remains non-contextual and non-relevant. These scholars thus argue for a need to frame alternative sociologies from within “indigenous” narratives/cultures.

Indigenous theory argues that if social sciences grew in the West through an engagement with its philosophical systems, it is also possible to do the same from other cultures and philosophical systems. It wishes to give an epis-

temic voice to itself in order to displace the power of the West's epistemic voice. It believes it can create principles/abstractions that are sensitive to indigenous history and social life and help to formulate “alternative” ways of doing sociology outside the language of “universal sociology” as formulated by Western/Northern sociology.

There are three identifiable trends within this perspective. The first is elaborated by Akiwowo Akinsola, a Nigerian sociologist. He affirmed that sociology can be constituted from the tales, myths, and proverbs of its people together with “the laws of true African wisdom.” He and his colleagues put together a sociological theory extracted from the poetry of the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. They argued that the principles within this poetry suggest that the unit of all social life is the individual and because the individual as a “corporeal self needs fellowship of other individuals,” community life based on common good is significant to the existence of the individual. This position has been questioned for the various methodological and epistemic problems that it represents, such as the use of folk culture to construct a sociological theory, the “truth” of its translation and interpretation, and whether its formulations can be interrogated by scientific methods.

The second trend in indigenous studies has tried to answer the last question – of being able to stand up to interrogation by scientific methods – by suggesting that Western science needs not be affirmed as being the only one in the world. Arguing for an autonomous social science that is both relevant and critical, Syed Farid Alatas reframes the problematic of indigenous theory by asking whether distinct cultures and their epistemologies can be used to constitute new critical scientific work. He contends that indigenous knowledge systems, such as that of Islam, have within them a scientific criticality that can interrogate empirical work. He asserts that these principles can also be used to constitute ways of doing sociology. The question that he poses is: how does Islam provide the metaphysical and epistemological basis for the constitution of new knowledge without committing to an Islamic sociology or an Islamic physics? Such an intervention would not mean abandoning science, especially its moorings in critical and investigative thinking, but, rather, enlarging its canvas and including novel notions of criticality from a non-Western culture.

A third approach to the indigenous emanates from the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith whose focus is also on West-

ern science. She argues that it is necessary to displace its scientific practices because these make the subject into an object of investigation. Western science imposes “the truth” on peoples and regions of the world by not involving itself with insider knowledge. She suggests a need for re-doing the methodology of science and argues for a science that is sensitive to the cultural values of the individuals, the community, and the people that are being investigated. She asks researchers to reflect on ways to de-stabilize the power of the objectivist research processes and to integrate the voice of the subaltern/indigenous into the research process.

These three trends interrogate academic practices within the South. A more revolutionary position has emerged from the decolonial perspective that follows Marx’s directive that social sciences need to change the world rather than only reflect on it.

> The decolonial perspective

Decolonial theory/perspective – also called the colonialism/modernity research program – is an intellectual movement originating in the Latin American region. It draws from a combination of perspectives including dependency theories, liberation theology, and social movement theorizations representing the Latin American experience. Its canvas is wide: it argues that it is necessary to make an epistemic and thus a methodological critique of the European theories of modernity such that new and novel epistemic positions can be articulated. It argues for the reformulation of social sciences through the creation of new assumptions that can stretch the inquiry of modernity to the “very borders of thought.”

It starts by suggesting that the major fault line in contemporary modernity theories and in sociology is the erasure of the colonial experience from its theoretical language. It argues that this invisibility has made contemporary theories of modernity ethnocentric. It gives a name to this ethnocentrism and calls it Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism for the decolonialists is an episteme that embeds all branches of social sciences and is particularly manifest in the disciplines of history and sociology. Three categories string together this position: “coloniality of power” theorized by Aníbal Quijano; “interiority/exteriority” conceptualized by Enrique Dussel; and “colonial difference” conceived by Walter Mignolo. All three overlap with each other.

Coloniality of power, according to Quijano, is built on two Eurocentric myths: evolutionism and dualism. On the one

hand, evolutionism organizes history as a linear narrative, as moving from the primitive to the modern. This linearity, conceptualized during the early periods of European modernity, has been imposed in interpreting non-European histories of the world. Dualism is another device and myth used by Eurocentrism to distinguish Europe’s history and society from non-European ones. Thus through dualism, Eurocentrism constitutes the knowledge of the other as its opposite and in binary terms. Embedded in this binary is hierarchy: this places European history and society as being superior (given that it was first to create modernity) and the rest as being inferior.

Coloniality of power argues that Eurocentrism constitutes theories justifying the control of: a) economy through land appropriation, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources; b) authority through the institutions of army, police, and political power; c) gender and sexuality through the family and education system; and d) subjectivity and knowledge through the elaboration of epistemology/knowledge systems.

Walter Mignolo’s concept of colonial difference (the division of modernity from coloniality and its use to create further divisions and differences in knowledge) continues the problematic established by the “coloniality of power” and elaborates it as an epistemic tool that privileges the intellectual and political space of and for Europeans. Mignolo suggests that this concept helps to comprehend the objectification of the colonial world and its peoples, the subordination of their imaginaries and their knowledge.

Enrique Dussel reframes Quijano’s myth of evolutionism to argue that contemporary history is designed as a theory of interiority extrapolated from regional European history to build on the myth of it being both universal and linear. He suggests that what is needed is a research program of and for modernity as a theory of exteriority, a way of perceiving the world from outside Europe, from a de-colonized standpoint. The need is to redraw existing contemporary philosophical, social, and historical assumptions in social science and to present alternative ones based on the voices of the non-colonized. The goal here is extremely ambitious: it is to reorganize the episteme of social sciences as it was constituted in the late eighteenth century and create new research agendas for redrawing the themes, specializations, and questions in order to re-frame the very foundations of the social sciences. ■

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> (Where) Do We Matter?

Looking Back on Polish Sociology¹

by **Marta Bucholec**, University of Bonn, Germany and University of Warsaw, Poland



Leon Petrażycki and Florian Znaniecki, two great figures of Polish sociology.

The history of sociology in Poland was from the very beginning marked by the tension between international consequentiality and local engagement. The tension is hard to negotiate, because it touches on the deep foundations of its disciplinary identity and translates into research, theorizing, institutional, and biographical strategies.

The persistence of the tension is partly due to the fact that academic sociology in Poland was essentially a foreign import. Even though there was much original social thought in former Polish territories in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (the country itself did not exist in any

form for the best part of this period), it was usually private science. When the process of institutionalization of sociology began almost at the same time in many countries, new science quickly started to develop along a few distinct lines. These were marked by the circulation of knowledge and mutual entanglements of what is often referred to as national sociological traditions. Retrospective nationalizing of social science makes it difficult to assess the contribution of such authors as Leon Petrażycki or Ludwik Gumplowicz. Their highly original concepts corresponded to the interplay of local cognitive and political interests in their surroundings, but they also reflected their participation in the transnational scientific

community. On the other hand, the impact of scholars from Central and Eastern Europe on the development of social science as a whole was disproportionately large exactly because the barriers of access to the scientific networks of imperial Europe before 1918 were comparatively low.

This dual experience of having a vested interest both in locality and in transnational scientific networks was also the lot of early Polish academic sociologists educated in the West, notably Florian Znaniecki and Stefan Czarnowski, whose activity developed in the re-created Polish nation-state. By then, Western sociology was universalized: a new science, new thinking style, new path of career, new in-

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tellectual fashion, and an appreciated ally in policy-making. An obvious additional incentive for craving a piece of all this novelty was that absorbing it maintained a communication channel with the West. The whole nineteenth century in Polish culture can be told as a story of a quest for belonging which would transcend the boundaries of locality. Becoming a sociologist was one way to accomplish this goal.

While the first generation of Polish academic sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s accepted the universality of Western sociology as a stock-in-trade, for their successors it was no longer such a simple matter. In the dark times of World War II and Stalinism, the link to the international community was cut and the problem of belonging and consequentiality as opposed to parochiality and marginality presented itself very sharply. When Polish sociology reopened to the world in the 1950s, the strategy of belonging had to be refined. Fortunately, it turned out that Polish society under socialism was fascinating for the West, and bridging the two worlds became a mission of sociologists – the most cosmopolitan and West-oriented among social scientists – who enjoyed quite a lot of freedom compared to those in other countries of the Eastern Bloc. For more than three decades, the best way to belong was to be eclectic in theory (with a strong influence of home-made Polish Marxism, far from Soviet standards) and locally-oriented in research. The West would readily forgive clumsy English, odd academic writing, gaps in theoretical formation, and often rather crude methodology, because at the time it was so very

welcoming to the surprisingly civilized strangers from the Wild East. If there was any point in the twentieth century that Polish sociology was orientalized in the meaning of Edward Said, it was probably then. On the other hand, some sociologists, to mention just Stanisław Ossowski, managed to practice the skill of belonging to two worlds at the same time.

This tendency – where by virtue of being a Polish sociologist one could automatically claim universal validity and international consequentiality – saw its culmination in the 1980s. This was because Polish locality, with the hallmark of “Solidarność,” was so obviously universally important. It was also theoretically inspiring and empirically challenging. But the effect of novelty was quickly consumed. Fortunately, in less than ten years, a new chance to claim international consequentiality came with the systemic transformation: after 1989, everyone was interested in it, even though Poland was only a fellow traveler of other post-socialist countries, not a type of society in its own right.

In a manner of speaking, Polish sociology should be grateful for the recent democratic backslide in the country. The year 2015 revived the withering interest in Polish transformation. Abroad, we are now asked what went wrong after 1989, and by answering this essentially local question we are again able to contribute to the general debate on the crisis of democracy and the rule of law, cultural wars, and populist counter-revolutions. Our locality is once more worth everybody's while.

But let us assume that the antidemocratic backlash can be dealt with and political stability restored, and that Polish society reenters the phase which it seemed to have reached after 2007: uneventful stabilization. What will we engage in then? Polish sociology was, up until now, largely a science of a self-proclaimed abnormal society, a self-inflicted researcher of both real and imaginary deviations. We have fed on Polish exceptionalism, but one thing we should really wish for our society is that it should finally cease to be an exception. This, however, would mean that we will have to find other ways to cope with the one hundred-year-old imperative of being universally important.

The challenge is not trivial. The old pressure on international consequentiality rooted in the ethical dilemmas of the nineteenth-century intelligentsia has gained some unexpected support from the neoliberal management of science and higher education, which the current national-conservative government smoothly took over from its liberal predecessors. In my book *Sociology in Poland: To Be Continued?* (2016) I argued that coping with the tension between international consequentiality and local engagement was the only way for Polish sociology to survive and to matter. Resistance to the allure of the sometimes fictional rewards of universal consequentiality is as important a means to this end as is a sober realization that our own society is not important for us because it is unique for others. ■

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> Young Precarious Workers

in Poland and Germany

by **Jan Czarzasty** and **Juliusz Gardawski**, Warsaw School of Economics, Poland, **Adam Mrozowski**, University of Wrocław, Poland and member of ISA Research Committee on Labor Movements (RC44), and **Vera Trappmann**, Leeds University Business School, United Kingdom



There is plenty of evidence that the younger generation across Europe experiences increasing uncertainty in their lives, stemming from the growth of temporary and involuntary part-time employment, falling trade union density, and difficult school-to-work transitions. The PREWORK project focuses on two European countries, Germany and Poland.¹ Germany is representative of the coordinated market economy (CME, as Hall and Soskice call it) traditionally known for institutionally guaranteed security for

workers. Yet, the labor market reforms of the 2000s contributed here too to the spread of agency work, increase of temporary work, labor market dualization, wage stagnation, and concession bargaining by trade unions. In Poland, being closer to the liberal market economy (LME), the recent waves of employment precarization stemmed from legal changes aiming at labor market flexibilization.

In both countries, young people are disadvantaged in the labor market, which involves high levels of tempo-

rary employment (in Poland), an increasing risk of poverty and work in poverty (in Germany), and greater risks of economic exclusion in both countries. We assume that the ensuing youth precarity can be seen in terms of uncertain employment; loss of living wage, social embeddedness, and full social rights; and the subjective feeling of precarity constituted by a loss of recognition and social integration. However, despite these negative developments, the collective mobilization of youth against precarity is limited and their overall satis-

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faction with life remains quite high. This leads to the question: what is the relationship between increasingly precarious working conditions, social consciousness, and life strategies of young people? Is precarity perceived as a *problem* by young workers in Poland and Germany? Or do they see it as a *norm*, an expected part of their working environment to which an individual needs to adapt?

PREWORK seeks the answer on two levels: 1) by investigating the impact of unstable working and living conditions on various dimensions of precarious workers' socioeconomic consciousness with CATI surveys in Poland and Germany on huge (N=1,000 in each country) random samples of people aged 18-30; and 2) by examining the relationship between increasing precarious employment and life strategies/career patterns of young people and the forms of their collective mobilization (and demobilization), through over 120 biographical narrative interviews with young precarious workers in Poland (60) and Germany (60), aged 18-35, who are in non-standard employment, unemployed, or in precarious forms of VET (vocational educational training).

The study is still ongoing but some tentative observations can be offered. The quantitative research sheds light on the subjective perception of precarity: 48.8% of young working Poles and 31% of young working Germans admitted to having worked under precarious conditions, defined as getting low pay or working on short-term contracts. Yet, the economic consciousness of youth in both countries varies.

Contrary to our expectations, the precarious status of young Poles and Germans has no significant impact on their normative visions of the economy. We assumed that having a non-permanent contract would result in stronger support for state intervention in the economy and egalitarianism. The indicator used in our research included fifteen variables. In Poland, only five variables display a statistical

difference between the responses of persons with a permanent contract and persons with temporary contracts. Furthermore, employees on non-permanent contracts show in some dimensions more liberal attitudes than those with permanent contracts. In Germany, the differences are clearer. People with non-permanent contracts are slightly less supportive of statist principles (33.8% vs. 24.8%), while leaning a little more often toward social egalitarianism (69.1% vs. 65% respectively). The economic views of young Poles are a combination of strong support for "domestic capitalism" (preferences for Polish companies and state regulation of economy) with relatively firm ultra-liberal inclinations: 53.4% of Polish interviewees prefer voluntary instead of compulsory old-age pensions compared to only 12.3% Germans. The economic consciousness of young Germans is closer to the coordinated market economy (CME), with their support for co-determination at work, compensation of income differences by tax policy, and free movement of workers in Europe (backed by 88.7% of German interviewees, compared to 66.6% in Poland). The views of young Poles are closer to liberal market economy (LME), despite some striking inconsistencies.

The qualitative research gives us further insights into the biographical framing of work-related experiences. We reconstructed six different types of work-related life strategies, variously connected with the forms of coping with precarity. For "laborers" – precarized blue-collar workers longing for stable and predictable employment – occupational flexibility is not normatively accepted, but adapted to and coped with by means of searching for stability in other, non-work-related domains of life as well as self-limitation of aspirations. "Professionals," usually white-collar workers aspiring for a stable, full-time job with higher income and good career prospects, either legitimize precarity as a necessary experience related to transition to the labor market or, particularly in

older cohorts, criticize it for blocking individual life projects. A different approach is exhibited by "creatives," often performing project-based work in NGOs, creative occupations and the cultural sector, who see flexibility as a necessary price for freedom from the routine of corporate or factory jobs. For "bricoleurs," experimenting with various entrepreneurial projects, precarity is perceived as a necessary cost of independence from employer, family, or state support. Finally, there is the "blocked" type, critical of precarity but not actively counteracting it due to psychological problems and/or rejection of the biographical costs to be paid for security, and the "withdrawn" type characterized by informants' distance from the world of regular employment which has lost – or never acquired – biographical significance.

Quantitative and qualitative investigations correspondingly reveal that young people in both countries feel precarious but usually do not criticize or challenge their precarity. Most young people seem to have grown accustomed to precarity, seeing it as temporary either due to their life stage or due to the investments they are undertaking that will pay off eventually. Criticism is weak and rarely leads to political or union mobilization. In other words, we are witnessing the ongoing "normalization" of precarity, which comes to be treated by many young people as a quasi-natural condition. ■

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> Why Do People Vote For Right-Wing Parties?

by **Katarzyna Dębska**, **Sara Herczyńska**, **Justyna Kościńska**, and **Kamil Trepka**, University of Warsaw, Poland

Despite popular support, the PiS government also inspired widespread protests. Flickr/Platforma Obywatelska RP. Some rights reserved.

As Arlie Hochschild explained in [Global Dialogue](#) in 2016, sociologists need to search for answers to the question posed in this article's title not only in economic processes and emergent social sentiments, but also in the biographies of the supporters of these parties. A similar intuition informed our research team (consisting – besides of authors of the text – of Prof. Maciej Gdula as a principal investigator, and Stanisław Chankowski, Maja Głowacka, Zofia Sikorska, and Mikołaj Syska) who explored the reasons for the growing support for Law and Justice (PiS), the ruling party in Poland since 2015. Law and Justice is considered a socially conservative party: conservative in the sense of values and etatist on the economic dimension. Even though this Eurosceptic and nationalist government has faced a lot of criticism both from the European Union and the more liberal parts of Polish society, its support has been steadily growing: it hit 50% in polls conducted at the end of 2017.

> Introducing our study

Our study was conducted in a county town in central Poland which we dubbed “Miastko” (“small town” in Polish). The ruling party received almost 50% of the votes in Miastko in 2015, compared to 37.6% nationwide. Our report was published as “Good change in Miastko: New au-



thoritarianism in Polish politics from the perspective of a small town.” PiS politicians have used the notion of “good change” since the beginning of the 2015 presidential campaign.

To explore the political convictions of PiS supporters, we conducted two interviews with each of the 30 respondents – inhabitants of Miastko: the first interview was a biographical one, and the second one concerned their views on issues such as abortion or welfare state policies. Our methodology drew on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of class distinction and its Polish adaptation by Maciej Gdula and Przemysław Sadura. We divided our respondents into two groups: the working class and the middle class. It is important to note that we did not conduct interviews with the so-called “losers of transformations,” a term denoting people who had fared poorly under the capitalistic changes after 1989.

> Two highly contested topics: abortion and refugees

Working-class interviewees generally opposed a total ban on abortion. Older working-class women favored liberalization of the existing anti-abor-

tion law. Middle-class women usually argued for the need for freedom of choice for women and stressed the burdens of bringing up an ill child. Despite some of our interviewees' significant openness to a possible liberalization of anti-abortion regulations, there appeared also a strong voice against abortion in general.

Most of our interviewees were against accepting refugees in Poland. Working-class interviewees argued that the refugees would not want to work and would expect social benefits. They highlighted the danger they posed to the Polish system of social care and the injustice resulting from benefits they may obtain. They linked the situation of refugees with war and usually admitted that they should receive support, but were opposed to helping them on Polish territory. Only two argued that accepting refugees into Polish society would not harm anybody – because of the small numbers the former government had proposed accepting.

Middle-class interviewees claimed more often that the incomers represented a different culture and were unwilling to accept the rules of Polish

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and European culture. The references to solidarity with those escaping war, and to the commonality of their experience of war and political instability with Polish society, appeared extremely rarely. According to middle-class interviewees, refugees should stay “where they belong, where they have their own place.” For some, the idea of Europe was one defined by exclusion; protecting the “purity” of Europe required that refugees, identified only with their religiosity and ethnic background, should be left outside. The disposition to order and clear boundaries appears in a solution proposed by one of our middle-class female interviewees: if the refugees need to be in Poland, they should be separated from Polish society.

> Destruction of institutions of the democratic rule of law

In December 2015, the government started to obstruct the work of the Constitutional Tribunal which is mandated to judge whether a law is in accordance with the Polish constitution. The previous government had elected five judges to the Constitutional Tribunal in September 2015, just one month before the legislative election. The then-parliamentary majority, an alliance of the conservative-liberal Civic Platform and the Peasants’ Party, had the right to elect three judges, but elected five. Despite the fact that the Tribunal maintained the election of three (legally elected) judges and invalidated that of two (illegally elected) judges, the new PiS-dominated parliament nominated five new judges and stopped the publication of the Tribunal’s decisions. The swearing-in of the newly elected judges by President Andrzej Duda led not only to a constitutional crisis, but to street demonstrations in Warsaw and other major Polish cities. The answer to the question whether the government’s measures concerning the Constitutional Tribunal were legitimate was not split across class lines, but across partisan lines: PiS supporters were in favor of its actions, claiming that it restored “plurality” to an allegedly Civic

Platform-dominated Tribunal; for its opponents these measures were an assault on democracy and a successful attempt to suspend any constitutional control over the government.

> PiS social policy: the “Family 500+” program

The “Family 500+” program was introduced in April 2016 as the flagship of the PiS government’s social policy. It is certainly one of its most important political measures. The program is a universal child benefit program; each family receives 500 zlotys (about 120 euros) for the second and third child (poor families can receive the money also for the first child). Its implementation marks a significant change in post-communist Poland: it is the first time since 1989 that the Polish state has implemented a large-scale redistribution effort benefitting both the middle and the working class.

Most participants supported the implementation of child benefits, the only exceptions being some middle-class adherents of the liberal opposition who regarded it as a form of “buying votes.” The benefits found favor with the majority of the middle-class interviewees who considered their introduction a symbol of the country’s new strength. Paying out child benefits was not seen as an extravagance, but rather as a “normal” measure typical of well-developed countries of the West, and a sign that Poland was joining them. Working-class participants were also in favor of the child benefits, although a significant part of them also expressed support for the proposition that local authorities should control the benefit expenditure of some recipients.

> The causes for support of the PiS are multilayered

Law and Justice represents a new model of ruling by bringing their redistributive program to life. Our research found that supporters of PiS are far more differentiated than is assumed by public opinion. In this article we

try to explore what these social differences are and to what factors we can attribute the rise of right-wing parties.

Our research showed that it is not only financial support for the poor that has triggered support for the PiS. Instead, it is successful because its actions appeal to the various needs and values of all classes. PiS politicians respond to the working class’ needs for dignity and recognition by criticizing the limitless consumption of the former “elites” at the public expense. They also speak to the dispositions of the middle class in their desire for sovereignty and order. Our study revealed a very interesting pattern: political opinions and declarations do not always overlap with the personal experience of interviewees.

At the same time, PiS has begun to destroy democratic institutions (such as the Constitutional Tribunal), all in the name of democracy and “good change.” The research unveiled that adherents of PiS consider themselves “democrats,” but reject its liberal form which is essentially based on self-limiting. Maciej Gdula refers to this new phenomenon by the term “new authoritarianism.” According to Gdula, we now observe a new phenomenon – this “new authoritarianism” characterized by radical change of the public sphere (dominated by the Internet, rather than by newspapers as in the past) and a specific relation between the voter and the ruling party’s leader.

The results of our research confirmed that prevailing explanations of the right-wing parties’ success had been exhausted. The findings have gained enormous public attention and triggered a wide public debate involving both left- and right-wing intellectuals who engaged in discussing the divisions in Polish society. ■

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> Prospects for Sociology

in the New Public Sphere

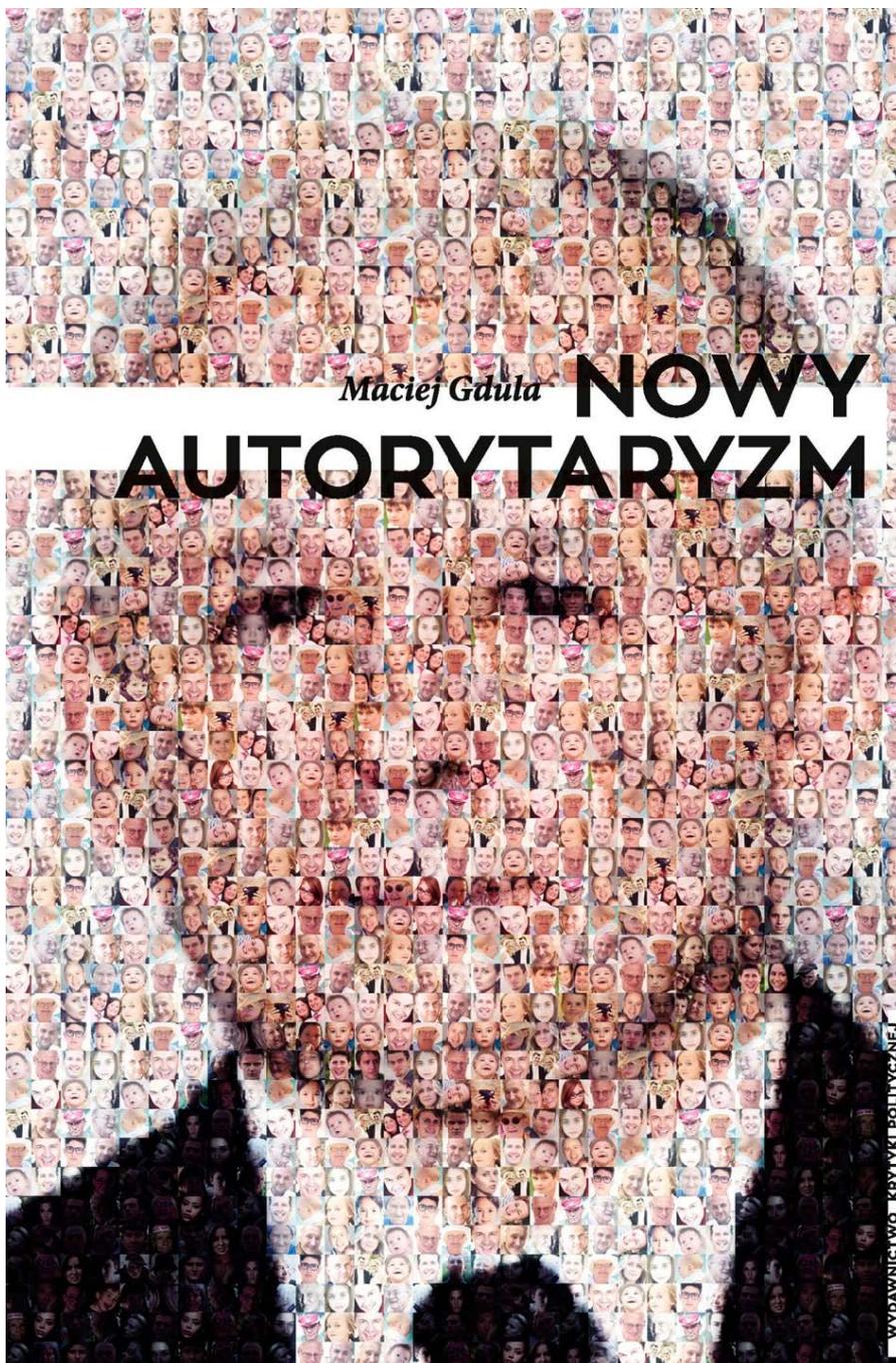
by **Maciej Gdula**, University of Warsaw, Poland

Gdula's New Authoritarianism is a good example of Public Sociology.

In November 2017, it had been two years since the elections that allowed the Law and Justice (PiS) party to form its own government. While many rules of liberal democracy were violated during these two years, over 40% of voters still supported the government. It was at this point that my report “Good change in Miastko: Neo-authoritarianism in Polish politics from the perspective of a small town” appeared.

This report, based on research conducted in a small city located in central Poland – Miastko – provoked a heated discussion, in which journalists, politicians and scientists participated for several weeks. Some of its concepts and interpretations have become constant points of reference in ongoing debates on politics and society. Instead of celebrating the success of the report, however, I would like to think about its social conditions of possibility. This can be important for rethinking the strategy for sociology’s presence in the public sphere and for strengthening its role in not only describing but also influencing social processes. Although I refer primarily to the Polish context, it is not unique to the processes taking place in Poland.

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> A new public sphere

To reflect on the scope for sociology to increase its impact on public debate one must take into account the recent changes in the public sphere. Briefly put, these consist in the transition from the domination of the press to the hegemony of the Internet. The former public sphere – at least in relation to politics – was organized around the press, and “cultural intermediaries” – journalists, experts and politicians – played a crucial role in public debate. The spread of the Internet hit the printed press, both in terms of economic and symbolic power. In Poland this process was fast and dramatic. For example, the biggest newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* lost 75% of its readers between 2005 and 2017.

In the public sphere dominated by the Internet, there is greater dispersion of content production. This is handled by large webcasts, smaller specialized websites, as well as single producers such as YouTubers who often gather large audiences. The competition for social attention between these producers is becoming fiercer, with an emphasis on speed in reaction, greater conflict, scandal, and morality.

> Weakness of intermediaries and sociology

Weakening barriers for entry into the public sphere translate into the spread of false information and proliferation of discourses which intentionally break with any accountability by reference to truth, giving rise to the concept of “post-truth.” The brutal competition for social attention is pushing out journalism based on longer processes of collecting materials and producing complex texts. The way to secure the existence of many media is to create an identity-related audience, connected with the medium by a sense of moral superiority and participation not so much in a discussion about public issues, as in a civilizational struggle.

Politics and discussion about public matters also adapt to these conditions and politicians become “media militants” representing radical views and providing clickable statements.

The audience participates in fast, aggressive, and moral communication, but there is still space for knowledge that relates to important public issues and at the same time confronts them with the results of research. The fierce competition between producers means that public debate tends to be sterilized and moves within the scope of a quick commentary. Traditional journalism is running out of time and money. In this situation, sociological knowledge that provides a new interpretation of reality meets with great interest and response, influencing the direction of public debate.

> Doing sociology that matters

What then are the rules for creating such knowledge? On the basis of the report about Miastko and its reception, I will risk formulating a few theses.

First of all, the moment when the text appears is important. In Poland, the report on sources of support for PiS appeared at a time when some of the previously used explanations became less and less convincing. For example, the common view was that while PiS promised to settle accounts with the elite, it nevertheless created new elites, with a tendency to corruption, which should have led to a fall in support for betraying its ideals. Meanwhile, nothing like that happened and PiS still enjoyed the support of 40% of the population. The report explained this phenomenon with the notion of neo-authoritarianism that, alongside other issues, addressed the role of a leader in controlling their own elite and guarding the direction of political change.

For the study to have an impact, synchronization with ongoing social processes is important. Of course this does not depend entirely upon

sociologists but we cannot ignore the question of the pace of production. It must be much faster than traditional academic production so as to relate to issues currently relevant to a wider audience. To deepen the research on PiS supporters it would be ideal to conduct additional research in several locations, increase the number of interviews, and elaborate them thoroughly. The problem is that the results of these efforts could occur, for example, after the next election, when they would only be historical.

The second important issue is the relationship with common sense knowledge. Academic discourses are becoming more complex, and research problems and their conclusions are constructed and presented in ways that are challenging even for an educated reader. When constructing knowledge that is supposed to have a social impact, we must refer to widespread judgments, even if – and perhaps especially when – we disagree with them. It seems important not to reject them as evidence of immaturity, ignorance, mental limitations, etc., but to treat them as judgments subject to verification.

In the case of our research in Miastko, there were several popular judgments regarding PiS supporters. One of them was the belief that PiS supporters are primarily people who are excluded or at least have a sense of deep harm. This was not confirmed by biographical interviews, because the vast majority of respondents talked about their lives in terms of achieving their goals or even in terms of success. Another conviction that we took into account was the assumption that support for PiS is based on gratitude for funds from the program Family 500+ (a monthly benefit of approximately 120€ for every child after the first). The respondents voting for the PiS did not define this program in terms of satisfying personal needs, but interpreted it as proof of the solidarity of the state and a sign that Poland is finally joining developed countries in

carrying out a comprehensive policy supporting families.

Thirdly, sociological knowledge should introduce the complexity that is lacking in public discussions. People like simplifications, but not all the time! If there is knowledge that connects with their experience and opinions, but deepens them or engages with them, it will be of interest. People who read the report on Miastko were interested, for example, in various criticisms of the elites formulated by representatives of lower and middle-class PiS supporters. For the former, the critique was based on pointing out the alienation of the elite and its distance from ordinary people. For the latter, i.e. for the middle class, the elite had lost its moral mandate to rule by compromising itself with corruption. This was the first occasion after a very long time that the topic of class diversity had appeared in Polish public debate.

Against stereotypes, people are interested in complex and demanding content. However, this must be more

than a display of scientific complexity. Simplifying the message, which consists in popularizing knowledge with the aim of generating conflict and competition for social attention, is also not a way for sociologists. Instead, complexity should be introduced to cause irritation and friction in the public discourse.

> The role of sociology

What can we gain from sociology that generates socially resonating knowledge? Realizing that there is no answer that will satisfy all sociologists, I will list options that are particularly important for me.

Sociology of this type has a chance to counterbalance current forms of communication that have a tendency to end in ritual conflicts, in which the brutalization and simplification of the message reign supreme. We cannot blame the journalists and politicians for this state of affairs. They operate in specific conditions they cannot easily negotiate. However, there

is no reason why these rules cannot be trimmed by sociologists, providing knowledge that counterbalances the negative tendencies haunting our public communication.

An important task of sociology is to give a real voice to people for whom there is little room in the public sphere. For me it is particularly important to create a space for the popular classes and show their perspectives and experiences.

The third question is how sociology places itself against other actors in the public sphere. In my opinion, the closest thing is to perceive it as opposed to journalists and politicians. Sociology is different due to its sensitivity and the knowledge it provides, as well as its autonomy from rivalry for social attention and distance from the pressure of political conflicts. This type of sociology may be a counterbalance to other participants in the public sphere by placing restrictions on their power to define social reality. ■

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